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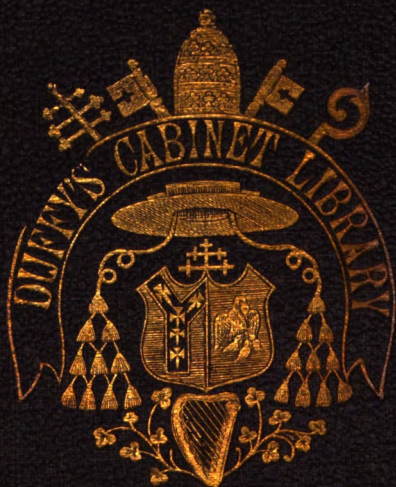
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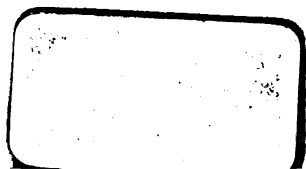
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THE
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
OF
ST. IGNATIUS.

WITH
MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS.

BY FATHER LIBORIO SINISCALCHI,
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

Translated from the Italian,
BY A CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN.



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TO THE
GLORIOUS PATRIARCH
SAINT JOACHIM,
FATHER OF
THE EVER IMMACULATE VIRGIN MARY,
CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN,
MOTHER OF GOD,
THIS TRANSLATION OF THE
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF SAINT IGNATIUS
IS HUMBLY DEDICATED,



TO THE READER.

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES of St. Ignatius were published at Rome in the year 1548. Though the saint was at that time unacquainted with learning any further than barely to read and write, yet this book is so full of excellent maxims and instructions, that it is most clear that the Holy Ghost supplied abundantly what was wanting in him of human learning. The Meditations of St. Ignatius are altogether new, and written upon a different plan from writers who preceded him. He appoints, for the foundation of these exercises, a morning meditation on the end for which we are created, that we fully convince ourselves that nothing is to be valued or sought after save as it conduces to the honour and service of God. The meditations on the fall of the angels, and of man, on the future punishments of sin, and on the last things, show us the general effects of sin. To point out the particular disorders of our passions, and to purge our hearts from them, he represents to us the two standards of Christ and the Devil, and all men ranging themselves under the one or the other, that we may be moved ardently to make our choice with the generous souls that follow Christ. Then he proposes what the resolution requires, and how we are to express in ourselves the perfect image of our Saviour, by the three

degrees of humility, by meditating on the mysteries of Christ's life.

By meditating on Christ's sufferings, he will have us learn the heroic virtues of meekness and charity, and by them to fortify our souls against contradictions ; and by reflecting on his glorious mysteries, and on the happiness of Divine love, he teaches us to unite our hearts closely to God.

Behold the plan of this work. To St. Ignatius we are indebted for this excellent method of meditation or the great truths of eternity. They are particularly adapted not only to the ecclesiastical and religious states, but also to Christians engaged in the world ; for the great truths of Christianity are always the same.

Those who are anxious to know more concerning the Exercises of St. Ignatius, may read the life of the saint, written by Bartolo, or in Alban Butler, from whose work the above is taken.

We dedicate this translation to the father of the blessed Virgin, St. Joachim, in order to introduce a devotion to that great patriarch at this moment, when the Church is deliberating on the question of making the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin an article of faith.

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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES.

MEDITATION I.

Of what importance it is to make the Spiritual Exercises with
fervour.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN the impious king Antiochus entered the temple of Jerusalem to lay it waste, his first act was to remove the golden altar, and the candlestick, which was also of gold.

The devil acts in the same manner when he intends to deprive of spiritual good that soul which is the temple of the living God: he takes from it the altar—that is, fervour of mind; he removes from it the candlestick—that is, the light which makes known the eternal maxims.

The devil cannot take from the soul the light of faith: he, however, removes the light of consideration; so that the soul may not reflect on what it believes. As it is of no avail to open the eyes in the dark, so, says St. Augustine, “it is of no advantage to be near the light if the eyes are closed.” The eternal maxims, considered in the light of faith, are most clear; yet, if we do not open the eyes of the mind by meditating on them, we live as if we were perfectly blind: and so precipitate ourselves into every vice.

If men were to consider the shortness of life, the

A

uncertainty of death, the vanity of the world; that they are between two eternities—one most happy, the other most miserable—it is certain they would be all saints. Why are they not so? They do not reflect. Gamblers, not reflecting on the immense sums they lose, easily risk their properties; so, those who do not consider the importance of salvation, easily lose their souls. What is still more lamentable is, that those think less on eternity, who should consider it more profoundly—those who are more deeply rooted in vice, and, for that reason, in greater peril of damnation. Thus the same happens to them as befell Jonas. God commanded this prophet to go and preach in Nineveh. He disobeyed, and went to Tharsis. Suddenly there arose a tempest; thunder rolled; the mariners cried out; merchandize was thrown overboard. In the meantime Jonas, whose disobedience had caused all these evils, slept soundly, and should not have awoken, had not one of the mariners descended to him, saying: “Ah! sluggard, is this the time to sleep? we all labour in the tempest, and thou sleepest!” Sloth is daily visible in the world. There are so many whose souls are full of vices, that our Lord, in order to rouse them, places constantly before their eyes sudden deaths, earthquakes, thunderbolts, misfortunes; while they, with greater sins than others, play and sleep profoundly, without being aware that they sleep on the brink of a precipice, and that the danger they thus incur of falling in is, in their case, no other than the danger of falling into hell. Ah! miserable creatures, blind wretches, if you sleep over

the interests of your eternal salvation. Jesus Christ watches for you, and with infinite benignity comes to awake you. "Why are you oppressed with sleep? Arise, and invoke thy God." What manner of life is yours? It is too long since you ceased to live as a Christian. "This is the hour to arise from sleep." Open your eyes, and listen to the voice of Christ: "This is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation." Let us profit well of the grace that God will confer on us in this season. "We beg of you, brethren, not to receive the grace of God in vain."—(1 *Thess.* iv.) To this end the present meditation is directed, in which we shall consider—first, Of how great consequence it is to perform the Spiritual Exercises with fervour, in order to amend our vices; second, How important it is to advance in virtue; third, How we are to profit by the Spiritual Exercises.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine our angel-guardian takes us by the hand, and introduces us into these Exercises, saying, as the angel did to Abraham (*Gen.* x., 12): "Leave thy lands, relatives, and the house of thy father, and come to the land I will show thee." Separate thyself for a time from all terrestrial affairs, and come with me to meditate on what concerns thy eternity.

THE SECOND PRELUDE

will be to say to God (*Psa.* xlii.): "Show me thy ways, O Lord, and direct me in thy paths." My

God, enlighten my mind to know well the way of my eternal salvation, and I will be attentive to your voice. "Audiam quid in me loquatur Dominus Deus, quoniam loquetur pacem."—(*Leviticus* xxiii.)

FIRST POINT.

How important it is to make the Exercises with fervour, in order to amend our faults.

Two things are necessary for a man to live well and holily, namely, to avoid evil and do good. For the one and the other the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are most powerful and efficacious; for in these Exercises we act with regard to the soul, as those do who wish to keep the apartments of a palace in good order. How is a chamber put in order? First, the floor is well swept, each corner is dusted, what is disorderly is set right, everything is put into its place, and all that can be added to embellish it is procured. Thus we act in the Exercises with the soul. At a period when we are at leisure, in a sequestered spot, with a clear light from God, we review the secret windings of our conscience—its evil habits, our past faults, with a view to cleanse ourselves by fervent penance; and then we think seriously of commencing a new life, that will be Christian and holy. It appears holy king David acted thus when he said: "I exercised myself in cleansing the irregularities of my mind." He afterwards explains in what manner, he did this, and it is precisely what is done in these Exercises. 1. "I meditated with my heart," here was meditation; 2. "I thought on the days of old," here was examina-

tion of past life; 3. "I raised my voice to the Lord," here was mental prayer; 4. "Deum exquisivi et delectatus sum," "I sought God and was delighted," here was the unitive way; 5. finally, "And I said: 'Nunc coepi,' 'Now I have begun,' this is a change from the right hand of the Most High," here is the fruit drawn, that is, a serious change of life. Thus acted holy David;—what we also are to do in the holy Exercises.

Jansenius, a learned commentator, on this passage, "*Exercitabor et scopebam spiritum meum*," says that David acted thus to cleanse his soul by penance. Genebrard says, he did so "to direct his soul to virtue." For these same ends we should act, for the Exercises are most efficacious to purify the soul from all stain, and introduce into it all that is good. First, they are most powerful to sanctify the most hardened and obstinate sinners. As gentle remedies are not sufficient for grievous maladies, but we must adopt those which physicians style powerful ones: for poisonous cancers prepared oils are not sufficient; we must use fire and iron; so, for certain souls, deeply rooted in vice, slight motives will not suffice, but the strong maxims of hell and eternity are necessary. These peals of thunder can arouse sinners from their profound lethargy; these bridles can reign in certain furious passions, and bring to pass that man do not plunge himself into wickedness. For this reason the Holy Spirit admonishes us always to keep our minds on the maxims of eternity, if we do not wish to fall into sin. "*Memorare novissima tua et in eternum non peccabis.*"—(*Eccl. vii.*)

Sophia, a holy matron, mother of Clement, bishop of Ancyra, seeing the cruel persecutions of Dioclesian and Maximian, and fearing that her son might prevaricate from the violence of the torments, animated him with the maxim of eternity. "Son," said she, "I admonish you that here there is question of eternity." And under the influence of this motive, he suffered under Dioclesian, Maximian, and Maximus, from eight inhuman judges, from the hands of innumerable executioners, so great torments, that Nicephorus, his historian, writes, that, since the creation of the world, there never was a martyr more tormented. Now, this is precisely what we do in the Spiritual Exercises. We meditate at leisure and seriously, not one alone, but all the truths of eternity. If each of them well considered suffices to make a person holy, all united, what strength will they not have in converting an obstinate heart. It is no objection to allege, that during the course of the year we can consider these truths, by meditating, reading, or hearing sermons. What is there then more in the Exercises?

I answer, 1st, according to Galeno, that the most powerful remedies are of little or no avail when they are not taken with the necessary precautions, namely, to observe a proper regulation of diet, to remain in the house, avoid cold air, and similar things. "*Generosa remedia sine victus ratione non prosunt.*" So, that the soul may profit by the great antidote of eternal truths, they must be meditated on in holy retirement, far from the affairs of the world, and with the assistance of a wise director. This is done

in the Exercises. Again, as medicine is of no avail to those who take no precaution against cold or unsuitable diet, so, if we do not retire for the time from entertainments, &c., the eternal truths will not sink deeply into our minds, and therefore will avail us little. The seed thrown on the ground by the evangelical sower was perfectly good : however, that portion which fell on stones, no sooner appeared than it was burnt by the sun ; that which fell among thorns scarcely arose when it was choked with brambles ; and the seed that fell on the public road was trodden on by passengers. So the evangelical truths are always the same. If they are presented to a distracted mind, to a mind occupied with a thousand affairs and interests, or to one exposed to vanity or worldly affections, for a time they make some slight impression, then immediately vanish.

2ndly. During the remainder of the year it seldom happens that these truths are heard from preachers in so striking a manner as they are laid before us in the Exercises, so that they are here as so many drawn swords, which strike more deeply ; besides, God communicates himself more or less with heavenly lights, according to our dispositions ; and where can a person be better disposed to be enlightened than in the Exercises ? To make the law known to the Israelites, God conducted them into the desert, that there, without disturbance, they might better hear his voice : there also he nourished them with manna, which may be called a lively representation of the Exercises ; as that was very small, but of great virtue and flavour,

so the sentiments which are here meditated on, are short, but of great virtue and efficacy. Man can never better hear the voice of God, and taste the manna of spiritual consolations, than in the Desert, that is, in the retirement of the holy Exercises.

For these reasons those who enter upon the Exercises feel as if they were entering a new world, in which they open their eyes to perceive what, perhaps, they have never learned, unless in a confused manner. He who thought only of acquiring dignity, and becoming a great captain, learns that all is vanity, and that he was born solely to be saved. He who thought that liberty consists in worldly pastimes and customs, knows now, that they may be grievous evils, capable of provoking the thunders of divine justice: from this clear knowledge they are contrite and confused. They feel like one who views the stars through a telescope, or an ant through a microscope, and is amazed to find the stars so great and the ant furnished with so many limbs: for the due performance of the Exercises sheds such light upon the maxims of eternity that men are amazed at their awful significance, and change their ways. The following is one influence out of many.

Michael Lewis, a German, was sent by his father, a baron, to the court of Lorraine, there to learn the French language. He gave himself up to every vice, particularly gaming; having lost all his money, in despair he called the devil to his assistance, who immediately appeared in the form of a youth, who filled his hands with money, saying: "Spend and play as much as you please; I will always give you as

much money as you wish, provided you are content to be my faithful friend:" he then induced him to write, with his blood, a bond, renouncing his soul. As one precipice usually draws into another, this impious man, returning to his country, gave himself up to such vicious courses, that he attempted to murder his father and mother, also himself. The miserable parents, being in great affliction, and not knowing to what cause to attribute their son's conduct, made so many inquiries that at length they succeeded in discovering the act of renunciation which their son made with the malignant spirit. To remedy so much impiety, his brother, a canon, under some pretext, conducted him to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, at Melesme. They immediately made him begin the Spiritual Exercises, to dispose him for a general confession. Then all hell was armed against him. The devil first appeared to him in the form of a lion, to tear him to pieces ; then, as a compassionate man, who tried to make him dislike the fathers, and be annoyed at what they said. He firmly resisted all these assaults, and with many tears made a general confession—during which he often fainted through contrition and horror of his misdeeds ; he revoked the contract he had made with the devil ; pronounced the profession of faith ; finally, hearing the votive Mass of St. Ignatius, in his chapel, he saw the devil against his will, restoring the deed of renunciation ; thus being disburthened, he continued to lead a very Christian life (*Bartoli, lib. v., vitæ S. Ignatii*). Such are the admirable conversions which often happen in the Ex-

ercises from the lively knowledge acquired of the eternal truths.

Enter, then, O Christian soul, into yourself; re-pass in mind the disorderly life you have hitherto led; see how your conscience has become an immense chaos of iniquity; see how much you require the Exercises. Here, you have to consider your most important affair, that is, how you are to be saved. What great thing is it, after having given an entire year to temporal affairs, now to give eight days to the wants of the soul? If you knew, for certain, that these Exercises were to be the last of your life—that at their termination, you were immediately to die, with what fervour would you not perform them? Who knows whether these are not the last admonitions and assistances God will give you? Our Lord, in anger after so many sins, might turn away from you and abandon you, yet he does not: on the contrary, as a loving father, he runs to you, though you fly from him; he calls you to penance, and seems to say to you, as he did to the sick man in the Gospel, who for thirty years languished at the pond, “*Vis sanus fieri?*” Do you really wish to be cured of the evils of your soul? If you wish it, I desire it also, and I am ready to assist you by my grace, to enlighten your mind, and inflame your will. Be courageous. “*Vis sanus fieri?*” O infinite goodness of God! O charity beyond limits! Will you be so foolish as to allow God to do so much for you, and on your part do nothing?

SECOND POINT.

How necessary it is to perform the holy Exercises with fervour, in order to advance in virtue.

As these Exercises are necessary for the wicked to reform their evil ways, they are equally so for the just, to persevere and advance in virtue.

Genebrard, on the seventy-sixth Psalm, "*Exercebar et scopebam spiritum meum*," says, that David exercised himself occasionally in reviewing the state of his soul, in order daily to increase in virtue: "*Ad dirigendum animum ad scopum virtutis*." On account of human weakness, even the most virtuous and holy relent and grow cold in their first fervour. As smiths, the better to work their iron, put it back frequently into the furnace, to be softened by the fire, and gardeners, to preserve a fine row of cedars and myrtles, frequently cut off the superfluous leaves and blossoms; so, to preserve a soul in the fervour of virtue, it must often replace itself in the furnace of the Exercises, and there, enlightened by God on its defects, divest itself of them and amend. Great fruit is continually derived from the Exercises, in those communities where they are annually made. St. Jane Frances de Chantal, the first plant of the order of the Visitation, said, that from long experience of what happened in the monastery of Holy Virgins, she observed that the Spiritual Exercises were for them, like water on the flowers of their virtues, to make them increase. A vase of flowers not watered for several days, appears languishing—the plant decays, the leaves dry up,

the stems wither, and the flowers have not strength to shoot forth from the branches ; however, scarcely are they refreshed with water than they become at once vigorous and beautiful. The plant again grows, the leaves assume their verdure, the buds shoot forth, and soon flowers appear. In the same manner, in religious communities, previous to the Exercises, the fervour of prayer, charity, and regular observances grow cold ; but these being made, all are renewed : more attention is given to prayer, greater assiduity in the choir, greater charity, more exact obedience, precisely as if a celestial dew of graces descended on the flowers of these virtues. It cannot be otherwise, for in the devout solitude of the Exercises, Jesus Christ speaks intimately to the heart. Oh ! how much more efficacious and powerful is the internal voice of Jesus Christ, than all that men could say. “ I will lead her into solitude, and there I will speak to her heart.” God speaks to man in many ways ; he speaks to the ears, by means of sermons ; to the eyes, by placing before them the corpse of a parent or friend ; and he speaks, as it were, to the whole body, by sickness ; but in the Exercises he speaks to the heart, and what does he say to it ? Sometimes he seems to speak, as he did to Adam after prevaricating : “ Adam, where art thou ? ” See to what a miserable state thy soul is reduced—“ Where art thou ? ” At other times he says, as the angel said to Lot, at the burning of Sodom (*Gen. xix.*, 12) : “ Festina et salvere.” Hasten and save thyself. Already hell is open to punish your sins—procure your salvation quickly. What

was said to the deceased youth applies here also: "Adolescens, tibi dico, surge," "Young man, I say to thee, Arise"—(*Luke* vii., 14). Ah! unhappy wretch, dead to God and to grace, once more revive, and be again renewed. "Come to me all you who labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you." Poor souls, who groan under the weight of innumerable sins, come to me and I will comfort you. "Open to me, my sister, my spouse—(*Cant.* v., 2.) Ah! obstinate soul, it is already a long time since I began to knock at the door of your heart, and will you be always deaf to my voice? Deign to open it to me that I may enter with my grace and my love. What heart can then be so inflexible as not to yield to the soothing voice of Jesus Christ! Hence arise those strong resolutions which, each day, are made in the Exercises, to give one's self to God, and to advance in every Christian virtue. King Ferdinand having sent twelve noble Bohemians to Rome, recommended them to St. Ignatius, to be instructed in a spiritual life. The saint having received them cordially, put them into the Exercises; they imbibed so much fervour in them, that the twelve became religious of the Society of Jesus. Oh! how efficacious are the Exercises for making a person not only good, but a saint.

Finally, let us add, from experience, God wishes to communicate his graces and mercies, especially during the Exercises. As the Blessed Virgin and the saints grant favours more easily to those who venerate their miraculous pictures than to others, so God and the Blessed Virgin, who taught these Ex-

ercises to St. Ignatius, will give special graces in them to those who wish to amend their lives. We have a bright example in Marina d'Escobar; this most pious lady had long begged of the Blessed Virgin to obtain from her Son some particular graces she desired for her soul; after many tears and lamentations, Mary sent an angel to tell her that during the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius all those favours should be granted her. Hence, we easily conclude, that our Lord communicates himself more abundantly during the Exercises; for, those graces which he could have bestowed on Marina at any period, he, however, would not confer but in them. If, then, this be true, O religious soul! reflect a little on yourself; observe whether your soul has grown cold in devotion—if it do not commit evil, at least whether it does no good. If from long indulgence in tepidity you know not how to advance one step in virtue, rouse yourself: now is the time to resume past fervour; if you do it not at this period of holy retirement, it is almost impossible you will do it hereafter. Our Lord gives you an opportunity not only to destroy all that is vicious, but to institute a new and more virtuous mode of life. He acts as the pious and valiant Judas Maccabeus, who, having subjugated his enemies, proposed renewing and purifying the Temple of God, which was profaned by infidels (1. *Mac.* iv., 36): “Dixit autem Judas ad fratres ejus: ecce contriti sunt inimici nostri, ascendamus nunc mundare sancta et renovare.” “And Judas said to his brothers: Behold, our enemies are crushed, let us now go up to

purify and restore the holy places." Having gone with his soldiers to Mount Sion, where the Temple stood, he found it plundered, on fire, the altars ruined, the doors half burnt; having bitterly deplored those abominations with tears and the ashes of penance, he replaced the altars, restored the ruins, and selected pious and religious priests, by whom the whole was sanctified with solemn ceremonies. Now, do you also say, "Come, let us ascend to these holy Exercises." *Mundare sancta et renovare.* Let us think seriously of reforming our lives, making our prayer with fervour, once more frequenting the sacraments, recommencing those devotions we omitted, practising more charity towards God and our neighbour. This is the fruit that can be drawn from the Exercises.

THIRD POINT.

In what manner the Spiritual Exercises can be profitably made.

The manner of drawing fruit from the Spiritual Exercises can be reduced—1. To make them in earnest. 2. With recollection. 3. With tranquillity and submission to the will of God.

1. They must be performed in earnest.

Many wonder at themselves and say, they have frequently made the Spiritual Exercises, without reaping any of the fruit which is attributed to them. In truth, they do not speak justly, of which they have often given proof. Though they have performed the Exercises and observed an exterior composure and retirement, yet they have not, in reality, penetrated the eternal truths, and endeavoured to practise what they had meditated; thus,

it is not surprising that they were little benefited. He who considers a picture of St. Mary Magdalen weeping, grasping a cruel scourge, does not run either to wipe away the tears, or to remove from her that instrument of penance, for he is aware it is only a picture. Of many who make the Exercises, the thirty-eighth Psalm appears to be verified. "Verumtamen in imagine pertransit homo." To judge from appearances, they seem to make the Exercises: they are modest, devout, contrite, but neither their minds are well persuaded of the eternal truths, nor their hearts well resolved to give themselves to God. It is, then, necessary to make these Exercises in earnest; therefore, every one, after having heard them explained by the director, should thus discourse with himself:—What I have heard, is it true or not? If it is true, why do I delay coming to a conclusion? Having made a courageous resolution, come to the practice of what has been proposed. To this end, St. Ignatius, being enlightened by God, called these instructions, not Spiritual Meditations, but Spiritual Exercises; for it would avail little to meditate on them with tenderness and compunction, if what has been meditated on, is not practised or exercised.

2. They must be made with recollection, both with relation to God and to ourselves. As to what relates to God, it is said (*Isa. xxiv.*, 15): "Gloriosum in insulis nomen Domini." God appears to show himself more beneficent with those who, retired from the affairs of the world, seem like so many islands separated from the continent. As the Holy Ghost

descended on the apostles during their retirement in the "upper room," and as the manna descended on the Israelites when they were in the desert, so the divine Spirit, and the manna of celestial consolations are more abundantly communicated in the Exercises, there being greater solitude. Concerning ourselves, this retirement is also very necessary; for the mind, if not divested entirely of terrestrial thoughts, cannot be disposed for those which relate to the spirit. As water, when not well shut and enclosed in fountains, cannot ascend on high, so the soul, when not well enclosed in solitude, cannot ascend to the contemplation of heavenly things. "Humana mens," says St. Gregory, *Pastor*, book, III., admon. 15., "aquæ more circumclusa ad superiora colligitur." To make the Exercises well, we must observe the saying of St. Augustine, *Ser.* 15, *de verb. Apost.*, c. ix.—"Tolle te a te et ea quæ impediunt te." "Remove from thee thyself and such things as impede thee." During this time, we should not think of friends, family, parents, or any temporal interest; not receive visits, letters, or news, but say to all temporal things what Jesus Christ said to his apostles at Gethsemane (*Matth.* xxvi., 36): "Sedete hic, donec vadam illuc et orem." "Sit here until I go thither and pray." Remain in peace without, for I must now think of my soul and eternity: of the rest, we can speak at the conclusion of the Exercises. Finally, they should be made with great tranquillity of soul, and not admit the deceits of the devil, who, in order to prevent the fruit of the Exercises, tries by all means to disturb those who make them.

B

When St. Ignatius was at Manresa, intent on these meditations, the devil tried to annoy him with various illusions. He appeared in the air with a fantastical appearance, as a serpent shining with various colours, and very curious to behold. The saint knew it was the old serpent and despised him. (*Nolar. V. S. Ign.*, c. xliii). The devil disquiets some, inducing them to dislike solitude as insupportable: let them reflect on the sufferings of a sick person, who is condemned by physicians to remain thirty or forty days in a close room, without taking any air. So much, however, is willingly done for the health of the body; and for the salvation of the soul, a retreat of eight days cannot be endured, with the liberty of taking the air in a garden. Besides, there is this difference between spiritual and temporal enjoyments; the latter appear more sweet, but are full of bitterness; the former appear disagreeable and bitter, but if tried are found full of sweetness. The Prophet says, "Taste, and see how sweet God is"—(*Ps. iii.*, 39.) Make a trial of applying yourself to prayer: *taste*, you will then find what interior consolation God communicates to his servants. The devil tempts others with the appearance of a greater good, such for instance as to settle their conscience; for this purpose, he distracts them entirely from the meditations, and keeps them quite occupied with a thousand scruples, thinking of the sins of their past life. Oh! what a deceit! The fruits of the Exercises are not scruples, but the reformation of manners: so that we must spend the time, first, in imprinting on our minds the eternal truths; then

in making strong resolutions with the will. As to what relates to conscience, at the end of the Exercises communicate with a wise director, and obey him in all things. It is also necessary to abandon self with perfect indifference into the hands of God, being disposed to do whatever he inspires, and always to say: "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

There are some who would wish to improve by the Exercises, on condition, however, that they should always retain their attachments or employments. Who are we, who wish to give a law to the divine disposition? How do we know what is good or hurtful for us? To have chalk or marble well wrought, it must be left to the sculptor to form according to his pleasure. In order that man may attain his eternal salvation, he should not follow his own inclinations, but obey the divine will, made known to him, either by interior illustrations, or explained by prudent priests, directors of souls. Whoever you are, then, who wish to enter upon the Exercises, dispose yourselves to make use of these recommendations which are so necessary to draw fruit from them: persuade yourselves of this great truth, namely, to attain salvation, you must suffer some inconvenience. "God, who created you without your consent, will not save you without your co-operation," is a celebrated saying of St. Augustine: "Qui creavit te, sine te, non salvabit te, sine te." Now that God, as it were, extends from heaven his hand to assist us, and to draw us out of the depth of our iniquities, let us also raise our hand

and cling to his beneficent right hand. "Dedimus corpori annum demus animæ diem." "We have given a year to the body, let us give a day to the soul." These are the beautiful words of St. Peter Chrysologus. Every father of a family treats the eldest son better than the younger ones: now, the soul with regard to the body, is more than elder, it is like a mistress in comparison to a servant; it is, then, only right that it should be treated much better than the body. At least let us treat them equally; let us bestow on the soul these entire eight days. Reflect, then, O religious soul, on this saying of *Ecclesiasticus* iii.: "Fili conserva animam tuam et da illi honorem secundum meritum suum." Remember to treat your soul better and with more respect, for it deserves it. For the past, doubtless, you have bestowed more love on a dog, and preserved with greater care a crystal vase than your soul. Change, then, your ideas, and restore to it the honour you had taken away. "Da illi honorem secundum meritum suum." "Give it honour in proportion to its worth."

COLLOQUY.

My good God, how much have you not done, and how much do you not yet do, to save and sanctify my soul! What a great benefit do you not grant me in these Exercises, to remain eight days in retreat, and far from every trouble, to think on my eternity! If I do not now amend, even if I do not become a saint, whom can I complain of, but solely of myself, who, by my obduracy, have rendered

vain the assistance of your grace? O my God, prostrate on the earth I thank you for so much goodness towards a miserable sinner. I bless your charity a thousand times. I exalt your mercies, and admire the benignity with which you endure my ingratitude; for, while I am thoughtless of my soul, you think of it from Heaven; at the same time that I fly from you, you call me to penance.

Ah! my God, how good you are!—infinitely good. Now, indeed, I should be more than a monster of ingratitude, if I did not surrender after so many benefits. Behold me at your feet, humbled and contrite. I ask pardon from the bottom of my heart for all the offences I have committed. Forgive, O Lord, forgive. I acted as a prodigal son: will you act as a loving father, and in these holy exercises enlighten my mind, inflame my heart, defend me from temptations, and grant me the grace to perform them with fervour and fruit. In the meantime I place myself in your divine hands, like soft wax, that you may act and dispose of me according to your greater glory and the good of my soul, repeating from my heart those words of your servant, St. Ignatius: “Receive, O Lord, my entire liberty, memory, understanding, and my whole will. All that I have and possess, thou hast given me, and to thee I restore them. Give me only your love and your grace, and I will be satisfied; I desire nothing more.”

MEDITATION II.

On the end of man.

INTRODUCTION.

ST. IGNATIUS, has given two very significant names to this most important meditation: I. He called it the fundamental meditation, as it is the basis of what is to be meditated on and resolved on during the Exercises. He has also called it the first meditation, not only because by its beginning is given to the other meditations, but still more, as in all sciences, natural or theological, there are certain first principles, sure maxims, from which arguments are deduced and consequences drawn of the most important doctrines, so from the knowledge of the end for which we were created by God, and for which we are in the world, consequences are to be drawn for the regulation of our lives. Aristotle, *Phys.*, text 89, says; "The end is the cause of causes; it is the rule, and as it were the helm of human actions, the centre to which turn, as so many lines, all the affairs and cares of the world." "Finis est," says St. Hilary, on (*Ps.*, l.,) "ad quem universa rerum, spei et negotiorum opera festinant." In this, man differs from the brute creation; animals, in all their actions, have no end; man, if he be sensible, always acts with consideration and for an end.

This being supposed, what end had God in creating us? Why are we in the world? This is the great point on which we have now to meditate, and on which Cardinal Pallavicino (the famous author

of the "History of the Council of Trent") meditated for twenty-two years. In order to comprehend it well, we may suppose the doctrine of philosophers, who distinguish between the immediate and the last end. The immediate end is what is spoken of at the moment; the last end, is the last view for which we operate; thus, whoever goes to Rome to obtain a prelacy, has for immediate end to arrive at Rome, and for ultimate end the prelacy. The immediate end for which man is created, is to serve God here on earth. "*Creatus est homo ad hunc finem, tu Dominum Deum suum laudet ac revereatur.*" This will be the first point of this meditation. 2. The ultimate end, is to enjoy God in heaven, and be saved. "*Eique serviens tandem salvus fiat:*" this will be the second. 3. The end of all the other unreasonable creatures created by God, is to serve man. "*Cetera super terram sita creata sunt hominis ipsius causa, ut eum ad finem creationis suæ consequendum juvent.*" This will be the third part.

The better to understand these important truths, the following preludes are inserted.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see God creating man, descending to the field of Damascus, taking a handful of earth, animating it with his divine breath, and forming Adam.

SECOND PRELUDE.

With a heart full of compunction say: My God, my Creator, I present myself before your divine Ma-

jesty, with the blind man in the Gospel, and I ask of you sight "Domine ut videam." "Lord, that I may see." I have lived so long like moles, that ever have their eyes shut and are buried under ground. I also have been in the world as a blind person who walks groping along, not knowing whether he is going. Ah! Lord, this is the grace I beg. "Domine ut videam." Let me know once in truth (*Job*, vi., 11), "Quis finis meus?" "What is my end."

FIRST POINT.

The immediate end of man is to serve God here on earth.

'Creatus est homo ad hunc finem ut Dominum Deum suum laudet, ac revereatur.' As God, by his sole goodness, willed to be the principle of our being, so he also wished to be the end of our labours and happiness (*Apoc*, i., 8): "Ego sum principium et finis." "I am the beginning, and the end." One hundred years ago, and for a preceding eternity, what was each of us? Nothing. Where did we remain? In nothing. The world existed a hundred years ago such as it now is; there was no want of us. How did we receive this soul, this body, this life, which we now enjoy? Even our mothers, who brought us forth, did not know it. Hence said the mother of the Maccabees (2. *Mac*. vii., 22): "Nescio, qualiter in utero meo apparuistis, neque ego spiritum et animam donavi vobis, sed mundi Creator." "I know not how you appeared in my womb, nor was it I who bestowed upon you breath and life, but the Creator of the world." That God,

then, who created the world, has created us also ; nor could he create us but for himself. As philosophers teach, to draw a creature from nonentity, infinite power is necessary, and this is found in God alone ; faith not only teaches us, but reason also suggests to us, that God alone has created us ; from him we received our being, and all the good we have.

If God has created us, for what end did he do so ? Every intellectual agent acts with election, and for an end : fools only act by chance and by natural instinct, like beasts. God then, being infinite wisdom, in creating man, must have had an end worthy of himself, What, then, was it ?

Did God intend, in creating man, that he should do nothing else but enjoy the pleasures of this world ? Or, that he should advance to worldly honours—become eminent in literature—a great captain—a great sovereign ? Certainly not. He could not do so for many evident reasons. First, because the end should be more noble than the means. Aristotle teaches it, *II. Phys.* : “ *Finis semper est melior et dignior ordinatis in finem.* ” The statue of a celebrated sculptor was never intended to be erected in a stable, but in a temple or gallery ; the soul of man, being most noble, immortal, and equal to the angels, cannot have for its end the goods of this earth, which are most vile. Second, if man were created, as St. Augustine observes, to eat and drink, and satisfy the senses, what difference would there be between him and the beasts ? Third, according to the doctrine of the angelical Doctor, St. Thomas, the end of man is that

which fully satisfies his desires, What earthly good then, ever fully satisfied the desire of man? None ever did. Who enjoyed the pleasures of this world more than Solomon? Yet he declared them all to be vanity; "*Vanites, vanitatum.*" A bird is created to fly; hence a golden cage will not content it, nor a royal saloon; it must ply its wings in free air; so, as man is never satisfied with earthly things, it is not possible he should have for his end the enjoyment of temporal goods; if so, the Author of Nature would have given him a useless end, insufficient to satisfy his desires.

What, then, is the end of man more noble than himself, that declares him superior to the animal creation, and that satisfies the vastness of his desires? Here it is—God: "*Creatus est homo ad hunc finem, ut Dominum Deum suum laudet ac revereatur.*" First, Man has for immediate end to serve God. What more noble, which surpasses all our merits and desires? Open, then, your understanding and comprehend it well, my soul; you are not created for earth, but for Heaven: not to serve the world, but God.

From these great truths, as from the first principle of celestial doctrine, we draw many consequences. First, How great was the goodness of God towards us? We were created without any merit on our own part, through his sole love; we were loved from eternity, before we were in the world, consequently, before we were able to merit the divine love: "*In charitate perpetuadilexi te.*" In being created we were preferred to thousands who might have been placed in the world and might serve God more faithfully;

though it was foreseen we should be disloyal, we were, however, preferred to others of much greater merit. If a father foresaw the bad end of a wicked son, he would not wish to bring him forth to light ; and God, notwithstanding his foresight of our ingratitude, created us, not amongst infidels, where we should have been lost, but in the bosom of the faith ; not disabled, nor lame, like many, but furnished with the many prerogatives we possess. O love without comparison ! Finally, in creating us, he enriched us with so many gifts which we never could have imagined or desired. If God said to any of us, previous to our creation : “ I wish to create you in the best manner you desire, mention what you wish ? ” Who should have thought of saying : “ Lord, I wish you to give me a soul stamped with the image of the divinity ; to have for end to enjoy God eternally. I desire to be born in a world where the beautiful heavens, the luminous planets, the well harmonized elements, shall be employed for me. I wish for my amusement—seas, rivers, woods, gardens, plants, and flowers : for nourishment—birds, wild fowl, fish, and fruits : for my treasure—gold, silver, and all kinds of precious jewels ? ” Who should have thought of such noble things as God has bestowed on us ? He, then, in creating us, by an excess of goodness, has enriched us infinitely more than we could have wished or imagined. What thanks, benediction, and love do we not owe him ? If we do not make him this return, how monstrous is our ingratitude ? We are, as it were, worse than ashes are with regard to fire ; they have

birth in fire, and are as it were its children ; notwithstanding, nothing resists it more than they do : fire boils vegetables, liquefies iron, burns stones ; ashes alone resist it : they are not illuminated or enkindled by the flame ; on the contrary, they stifle and extinguish it : so it is with an ungrateful man (*Sap. xv., 10*), “*Cinis est cor ejus quoniam ignoravit qui se finxit.*” He is created by God, and is like the Son of God, yet, worse than ashes, he will not allow himself to be enlightened and enflamed with the love of his Creator—he rather opposes his will, and renders fruitless the designs of God in creating him.

The second consequence is, that if we belong entirely to God, we no longer belong to ourselves. “*Quid non tam tuum. quam tu, si alicujus est quod es?*” “What is so little yours as yourself, if it's another's, that you exist. The beautiful saying of St. Augustine, *Tract 25, in Jo.*, “We should be entirely of God and for God.” St. Bernard well says, *Tract de dilect Dei.* “*Ex toto se illum diligere debet, cui se totum debere non ignorat.*” “He ought to love with his whole self him to whom he owes his whole self.” A tree in a garden belongs entirely to its owner : all therein contained is for his service—flowers, fruits, and timber ; whatever is thence taken away is a theft. The slave bought by his master belongs entirely to him, all his actions are directed to his master's service ; yet neither the gardener nor the master gave a being to the tree or the slave. How much more then should man, who has received his being from God, belong entirely to him, employ in his service

all his thoughts, affections, and actions? If he give a part to the world or the devil, he certainly commits a theft: thus, a Christian child in India, well answered a tyrant who demanded his rosary, threatening to behead him if he did not take it off his neck. "How," said the child, "if the rosary appertain to God, can you wish me to give it to an enemy of God?" We should also often repeat the same. If my thoughts appertain to God, how can I give them to vanity? If my heart belongs to the Creator, how can I give it to creatures?

The third consequence is, if we do not fulfil the end of serving God, for which we were created, we are quite useless in this world. A key made for opening a door, if it do not open it, is thrown away. A tree planted to bear fruit and not bearing it, is condemned to the fire. He, then, who does not employ his soul for the end of serving God, for which it was given him, keeps it in vain. "Acceptit in vano animam suam"—(*Ps. ii.*, 34.) According to the explanation of St. Bernard—(*Ser. in Ps. xxiii.*) "Frustra vivit, vel omnino non vivit dum non vivit ea vita, propter quam, ut in ea viveret, acceptit animam suam." Ah! how many are there in the world, though solely and purposely created to serve God, serve creatures, serve the world, serve the devil, but not God! "Dixi non serviam." On the contrary, they act in such a manner, that God himself, the first cause of their operating, serves for their wickedness. (*Isa. xliii.*)—"Servire me fecisti in peccatis tuis." All these merit the punishment given by Christ to the fig-tree

which bore no fruit : for that reason he condemned it to the axe and fire—(*Luke xiii., 7.*) “*Ut quid terram occupat?*” “*Succide ergo illam.*” God could say to them—“What are you doing in the world? Go to eternal fire, and let another St. Teresa and St. Francis of Assisium come to serve me.”

SECOND POINT.

The ultimate end of man is, to enjoy God in heaven.

“*Eique serviens, tandem salvus fiat.*” God would have granted man a great favour, had he given him for ultimate end, to serve him, and as a reward for his services, the incomparable honour of having served a God. It would have been a great favour to man, even though his last end were to serve an angel—for angels are most sublime spirits: just as the last end of irrational creatures is to serve man. Oh ! how much greater has been the goodness of God towards us ! He has given us as our immediate end to serve him, and as our ultimate end to enjoy him, and be saved : therefore, it is he alone can satisfy human desires, and having enjoyed him, there is nothing more to be desired. The angelic doctor says (*12 qu. 2, ar. 8.*) “It would not be an ultimate end, if after the same there was anything to be desired.” The same holy doctor concludes, “that temporal things are not our end but Christ.” We have not a lasting city here, but where Christ is, “*Exeamus ergo ad ipsum,*” “Let us go forth therefore to him.” Not being able to enjoy God without saving ourselves, our Lord has united the interests of his glory with our salvation.

Man following his last end, reunites himself with his first principle, in the precise manner that the genealogy of Christ, described by *St. Luke* iii., 23 and 38, terminates, with a beautiful circle, in the same God whence it begins. "Et ipse Jesu jerat." &c., &c., terminates "qui fuit Adam, qui fuit Dei" . . . "Who was Adam's, who was God's." Abbot Rupert concludes "Initium et finem conunxit et circulum fecit."

This end of enjoying God and saving oneself is most just; first, it being conformable to all laws, that the creature should be entirely turned towards the love and enjoyment of the Creator. Second, the end is most noble; man has the same end as the angels: he has the same God in his actions, he has no other end than himself and his glory. What an honour for a prince to be heir to a kingdom! A lady to be chosen for the spouse of a king! A golden chalice to be made to preserve the divine blood! How much greater honour for man to be destined for an eternal kingdom, and specially created for the enjoyment of God! Third, it is a most easy end: in order to gain it, it suffices really to wish it. To be rich or noble, it is not sufficient to will it; but to be saved, and become a saint, it is sufficient to will it with resolution. "Velis et poteris," says St. Augustine, elsewhere in *Ps. xcii.*—"Ecce dum loquor muta cor, et fiet tibi." Finally, it is a most necessary end: for God is determined that man should attain it; if he do not obtain Paradise, for which he was created, he receives in punishment eternal damnation. If water do not arrive at the sea, which is its centre, it is

not for that destroyed or consumed ; but, should man not arrive at heaven, which is his end, he is condemned to the abyss : thence we conclude, that man born for God, should conceive a holy emulation, and not vilify his affections with terrestrial things, with desires of worldly pleasures common to beasts. Cleopatra and Marc Antony for amusement went to sea to fish ; the queen while seated at a golden poop, cast the fishing-rod into the water, while dexterous swimmers immediately fastened to her rod some large fish, which she drew up with great joy ; as the same did not happen to the king, he was a little annoyed, but the sly Cleopatra consoled him with adulation, saying : “ *Natus es reges et regna piscari :* ” “ Do not be angry, O sire, that the fish do not come to your rod ; you are born for a much more noble end, to fish for kings and kingdoms.” Ah ! man, know that you also are born for this end, to enjoy the beatific vision, the King of kings, to take possession of an eternal kingdom.

2. In all our actions, we should have in view only to please God, and to do all for him, as the heliotrope turns towards the sun, and the needle floating in the mariner’s compass always turns towards the pole. I do not say temporal affairs should be neglected ; but as a person who sails in a ship, whether he eat or sleep, does not for that stop his course, as he has always the helm turned to the prefixed term ; thus, even in our indifferent actions, we should have in view to please God, and fulfil his holy will. “ Whether you eat, or drink, or sleep, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God.” In fine,

we should always incline towards our last end, who is God, without ever allowing ourselves to be turned away by any human pleasure, like a river running to its centre, the sea : it passes through flowery meadows, and in nowise dazzled by these beauties, it passes in haste, repeating with its murmuring, "To the sea, to the sea : " it passes near the walls of strongly fortified places, and illustrious cities ; being in nowise stopped by their magnificence, it flies, saying, "To the sea, to the sea : " its streams flow under pretty arches of royal bridges, and without attending to their superb structure, it continues on to the sea : thus is man to go to his end. If the world try to attract him with vain honours ; No, he should say, these are not my end, to God, to God : if the devil wish to deceive him with worldly pleasures ; no, he should say, these are not my end, to God, to God. "Ad altiora natus, quam ut sim corporis mancipium mei." "Born for higher than that I should be the bond-slave of my body." So said Seneca.

3rd. How distressing is the disorder of those, who do not act for this end, being deceived by the false goods of this world : they are like the crow mentioned in Genesis, which was sent by Noah out of the ark, to find a spot of ground already dry after the late deluge ; it, however, did not do so ; on the contrary, it was completely occupied in devouring dead bodies. Ah ! how many are there though born to enjoy God, and to be saved, do all they can to please the devil, and be damned.

The celebrated Sir Thomas More, having unex-

pectedly entered the chamber, where his daughter was dressing for a festival, observed, that to have a more genteel appearance, she caused herself to be tied with a cord, the knot of which, two of her maids were by degrees endeavouring to tighten. Sir Thomas seeing this cruel martyrdom sustained by his daughter for the vanities of the world, sighed, and turning to her, said : " Daughter, God would do you a great injury not to send you to hell, as you labour so much to be damned." Oh ! to how many in the world could this be repeated, who for interest and ambition, which conduct them to hell, labour and suffer much more than the good do to practise Christian virtues that lead to Paradise.

THIRD POINT.

The end of other creatures is to serve Man, and help him to attain his end.

As the end of man is to serve God, and be saved, so the end of all other creatures is to serve man, and to be for him so many means to attain eternal salvation. Aristotle says : "*Nos sumus quodammodo finis omnium.*" Who could believe it? Irrational creatures perfectly accomplish their obligation of serving man : the heavens, sun, moon, and planets do not cease their course : elements, plants, beasts never omit to administer to man, not only what is necessary for his livelihood, but whatever he may wish for relief or pleasure. Man, on the contrary, though gifted with reason, does not fulfil his end of serving God ; but, perverting the order of divine wisdom, uses, as means to be damned, the creatures

which are given him as means of salvation : makes the enjoyment of creatures an end, whereas it should be only a means. He commits two great outrages, one against the Creator, on whom he turns his back ; the other, against the creatures themselves, by obliging them to concur against their will in the offences committed against the common Creator. St. Bonaventure seemed to himself to hear the heavens, the elements, and all in the world resenting so great a wrong, and crying out against the sinner. The earth cries out against him : "Why do I support him and bear the weight of his sins?" The waters—"Why do we not swallow him up?" The air—"Why do I suffer him to breathe?" The stones—"Why do we not bury him alive?" Hell—"Why do I not consume him?" Finally, all creatures cry out : "He does not serve his God : we, therefore, are no longer obliged to serve him."

Let us then open our eyes for once, and learn to make good use of creatures, as means, and in the manner most conducive to our salvation. This is the great consequence drawn by St. Ignatius. As the pilgrim does not mind whether the road be agreeable or difficult, but solely whether it lead to the proposed term : as the sick person does not consider whether the medicine be more or less disagreeable, so that it contribute to his cure : so, in the use of creatures, we should always have in view what contributes most to our salvation. If adversity be more useful to us than prosperity, retreat than liberty, crosses than pleasures, we should embrace them. If what is more dear to

us than the pupil of the eye be an occasion of scandal, we should reject it, and deprive ourselves of it.

God has given us innumerable means, natural and supernatural, for our salvation. King Nebuchadnezzar, having destined the three children for the honour of remaining in his presence, provided them with a noble governor to nourish them with royal food. So God, having destined man for the great honour of being in his presence in Heaven, provided him with natural means of memory, to remember the divine benefits; understanding to know what is good; a will to embrace it; health, to sustain the sweet burthen of the evangelical law; riches, to enrich himself by almsgiving; nobility, to become more agreeable to the King of kings. Besides other supernatural means—the holy sacraments, spiritual books, sermons, good example, churches, oratories, priests. Even the evils of the body—sickness, disasters, persecutions—are sent for the good of the soul, to arouse it.

Besides these general means, how many special ones are provided for each individual! How many lights, inspirations, remorses of conscience, opportunities of living well! "What more, then," says our Lord by his prophet, "could I do for my vineyard, that I have not done!" With fewer helps than God has given you, so many have become saints.

No Christian, therefore, is excusable if he be not saved: and yet, innumerable are those who are lost. Why? Because many do not avail them-

selves of such means. They resemble the insects called centipedes, which, notwithstanding their numerous feet, are the slower and more indolent in walking; or like sea fish, which, notwithstanding their being in salt water, are, however, not salt. "Homines quasi pisces maris," said the prophet Habacuc (i., 14.) By many pretexts and dissimulation they disengage themselves from acting well. In the Church there are sacraments, and they do not avail themselves of them, saying, "they have not time." For prayer they have not sufficient understanding. They pretend to be very poor, in order not to give alms. They have not sufficient health to do Christian penance. To exempt themselves from devout exercises, they put them off as affectation. O God, what folly!

Others take the means for the end, and the end for the means. Oh! what disorder! Creatures are, as it were, a ladder whereby to ascend to the knowledge and love of the Creator. Then, man should place them under his feet, and step upon them in his ascent. He does the very opposite. He places this ladder upon his head, by seeking creatures as the object of his enjoyment, and the end of his desires. What more? The body which is vile, should serve the soul, which is mistress and the heiress of paradise: yet wicked man makes the soul serve the body: provided the body enjoys a momentary pleasure, he does not mind the soul's being eternally injured, which is a disorder similar to that which Solomon so much deplored: "*Vidi servos in equis et principes ambulantes super terram*"

quasi servos"—(*Eccl. x.*, 7.) "I have seen slaves on horseback, and princes walking as if slaves."

Finally, others make use of means given them by God, against God, turning against him his own benefits. Nobility is used to become more proud; riches, to be more dissolute; beauty, to encourage vanity; knowledge, to become more wicked; sacraments, to increase sacrileges; churches, to multiply irreverences and excesses. O monstrous ingratitude! David had reason to lament it. "Conversi sunt in arcum pravum"—(*Ps. xxvii.*, 59.)

History shudders, relating the diabolical impiety of a person in Flanders, who murdered a soldier with the same instrument with which the soldier a short time before had given him life, by cutting down the rope from which he was hanging, when on the point of expiring. What shall be said of those who make use of the benefits of God as arms to offend him and crucify him again? When the kings of the Goths armed a nobleman, the sword was so presented as to be received by the point, to indicate that it should never be turned against the king who had bestowed it. We should learn not to turn the means given us by God for our salvation, against our ultimate end, which is God.

Let each entering into himself, reflect on the tenor of his present life; run in thought, over all the years he has been in the world, saying (*Isa. xxxviii.*, 15): "Recogitabo tibi omnes annos meos in amaritudin eanimæ meæ." O God! what a monstrous way of living has mine been. "Deflexi abs te et factus sum monstrum vitæ." I can also weep with

St. Augustine, for not living for God, who is my end. I am a prodigy of iniquity, as a fire would be in the world, not ascending on high, or a stone not falling down to its centre. I let chance regulate my life as animals do. "Erravi sicut ovis quæ periit." "I have strayed like a sheep that was lost." I was placed in the world to serve God; and not only have I not served him, but I have served his enemy, the devil. I was created to be saved, and I mind every other thing but my salvation. For what end have I employed so many years of life? For tiresome interest, vain honour, and passing pleasure; and for these I have undergone the greatest labours and solicitude. For God, my soul, and my salvation, I lamented spending one hour. Oh! days, months, years of my life, how ill have I employed you. "Remember all the years of thy life in the bitterness of thy soul." My soul, what are you doing? When will you open your eyes to employ better the short remnant of your life? Have courage to make the same strong resolution with St. Dositheus. He is mentioned in the *Lives of the Holy Fathers*, as being a youth of delicate complexion and slender figure: notwithstanding, being excited by the examples of singular sanctity given by some holy religious in a monastery, he went in haste to the abbot St. Dorotheus, and casting himself at his feet, with tears and sighs begged to be admitted as his disciple, repeating these words: "I wish to save my soul." This prudent superior, thinking that his apparent delicacy rendered him incapable of bearing the severity of observances, said: "Ah! how willingly would I comply with the

fervour of your desires, but your delicacy prevents our mutual consolation. Do you know the rigour of our observances?" "It is of no consequence," said the youth, sobbing; "all is little, for I am resolved to save my soul." "Well," added Dorotheus, "but God does not wish us to commit suicide." "Whether I live or whether I die," answered Dositheus, "I will not leave your feet until I obtain my request; for I wish to save my soul." "Oh! do as you please," replied Dorotheus; "I cannot, and I should not admit you." In saying these words he left Dositheus, who continued to repeat: "I wish to save my soul." As he would not leave, the porter was obliged to remove him; but the holy youth, who was left there in the evening, was found in the same place the following day, redoubling his sobs, and crying out: "I wish to save my soul." The holy abbot, moved with compassion, admitted him at length among his religious, with whom he lived five years, leading so virtuous and exemplary a life, that he died a saint.

This strong resolution, then, I ought also to adopt. This is the practical fruit to be drawn from this meditation. I am resolved, cost what it may, to be saved; I wish at any rate to attain the end for which I was created. "I wish to save my soul." I was placed in this world solely to serve God; I will no longer serve vanity, pleasure, or interest. I was created to save my soul: whether I live or die, whatever the world may say, notwithstanding my passions, I will not attend to anything else but this most important affair. "I wish to save my soul."

What a subject of confusion for me if irrational creatures punctually follow their end, and I, on the contrary, who am gifted with reason, deviate from mine. What a shame, that one born for the enjoyment of God in paradise, should debase himself with vile pleasure. St. Bernard cries out with reason (*Ser. 24, in Cant.*) : “*Erubescere volulari in cœno quæ de cœlo es.*” “Be ashamed to wallow in the mire—thou who art of heaven.”

No : I shall no longer be as I was : if for so many years I was blind, and lived by chance like animals, it shall not be so in future. I will act towards God in a grateful manner, who has destined me for so noble an end : to fulfil his designs I wish to have that sense which hitherto was wanting—namely, to spend my life for that which solely is of consequence to assure my eternal salvation—“I wish to save my soul.”

COLLOQUY.

My good God, the love of my soul, here I am at your feet humble and contrite, to protest to you my resolute will to be saved, with your assistance, cost what it will, and to turn towards you, my last end, this soul which you have given me as my first beginning. “*Volo salvare animam meam.*” “I wish to save my soul.”

It is but too true that I have walked for so many years out of the right path ; for I did not consider this great end which you have given me for guide to conduct me to heaven. I have wandered away too far from you, and worse than the prodigal

son—"abii in regionem longinquam"—"I went away into a distant country"—attracted by the pleasures of the world and the suggestions of the devil. I have not the heart to consider this soul of mine so laden with faults ; for it has walked amidst the wickedness of the world, as it were in obscurity, without the light of its great end, "*Sordes ejus in pedibus ejus, nec recordata est finis sui.*"—(*Jer. i., 9.*) I recognise my errors in the most lively manner : I detest them ; and I would wish for tears of blood, to weep bitterly over them.

Deign, my God, to be moved to compassion. You who are the true way to heaven—"via verites, et vita"—direct my steps, regulate my life with your assistance, and my path in the right way of salvation. "*Perfice gressus meos in semitis tuis.*"—(*Ps. xvi., 5.*) I place myself in your hands, and as one blind I will allow myself to be conducted by you what way soever you please ; for I wish to save my soul. If you wish me to be in the way of crosses and sufferings, here I am. "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." If you wish to conduct me by means of prayer, fasts, and alms, I am ready for all ; for I really wish to be saved—"volo salvare animam meam—and I wish, in being saved, to enjoy and to love you, to find in you the plenitude of my desires for all eternity.

MEDITATION III.

How much it imports Man to attain his End and be Saved

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the most strange follies is certainly that related in the Second Book of Kings, of Achitophel. Being in despair at his designs failing against King David, he went to his house, there, with all possible attention provided his people with everything necessary, made up his accounts, and placed his domestic concerns in order; after having adjusted, with the most exact diligence, all the affairs of his house, children, and goods, he went and hanged himself to a beam: "*Disposita domo sua, suspendio interiiit*"—(2 *Reg.* xvi., 23.) O foolish man! He provided for all except for himself. What was of little consequence he attended to with the greatest solicitude; what was of greater moment than life itself, he not only neglected but consigned deliberately to perdition. Oh! blind, extravagant, silly man. O God! would to Heaven that similar and even greater follies were not daily seen in mankind, who, as St. Jerome says, "*in minimis cauti, in maximis negligentes.*" "Cautious in trifles, heedless in things of the greatest moment." How many are provident and attentive for temporal affairs, which are of little consequence; and most negligent in the affairs of the soul, which are most important? For a law suit, an interest, for domestic cares, to gain a post of honour—for these, indeed, labour and toil are not spared—are considered

well employed ; on the contrary, to gain for the soul an eternal kingdom, everything appears too difficult. St. John Chrysostom could not refrain from saying : “ Unigeniti autem regni futurus particeps, non in mille enses insilis, non in ignem te conjicis ? ” “ With the prospect before you of becoming a sharer in the kingdom of the Only Begotten, do you not leap in upon a thousand swords, do you not fling yourself into fire ? ” Let us see by the light of faith how great this error is ; let us seriously meditate how important it is for man to attain his end and be saved.

I will ponder three powerful motives which shall form the three points of my meditation. It imports man, above every other affair, to be saved. 1. The interest is great. 2. The success difficult. 3. The error, without remedy.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine our good angel leading us by the hand, withdrawing us from the world, and guiding us to the throne of God, saying the words which the angel uttered to Lot, when he drew him from Sodom, and delivered him from burning (*Gen. xix.*, 17) : “ Save thy soul.”

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say to God from your heart (*Psa. cxviii.*, 94) : “ I am thine : save me.” I am the work of your hands, made purposely by you that I might be saved : grant that I may for once understand this great truth—that the greatest error man can fall into

is, to neglect the salvation of his soul. "Sane supra omnem errorem," says St. Eucharis, "et ignorantiam est, dissimulare quemquam negotium salutis suæ."

FIRST POINT.

In the great Affair of Salvation, the Interest is the greatest.

Good sense requires that the greatest labour and solicitude should be employed for matters of greater moment and consequence: even serpents are thus prudent; when assailed, they expose every part of the body to be wounded, with the exception of the head, which they protect by every possible means. Who can doubt that the most precious thing man has is his soul? It is spiritual, eternal, stamped with the image of God, created by God with the breath of the divinity, to denote, as Tertullian says "As breath proceeds from the heart, so the soul emanates from the loving heart of God." Finally, created not with a simple fiat like other creatures, but with the full council of the three divine persons, who said: "Faciamus hominem." "Let us make man," to signify, as Tertullian reflects, that the most important affair which God had in the beginning of the world was to create the soul: and the most important affair of man is to save it. "Cum condidit hominem Deus, fecit sibi, et aliis negotium."

It is so noble, that to save it, the Redeemer, who is infinite wisdom, thought thirty-three years of labour well employed, with the shedding of all the blood of his veins. We should here reflect on the sentence of Eusebius Emisenus: "What God has

done for the salvation of all mankind, he would do for each soul in particular." Each person then is as much obliged to God as to all mankind together.

For the salvation of souls, the holy angels-guardian, those most sublime spirits do not disdain to be their guides and their masters. What efforts do not the demons make to gain them? For one soul, they would willingly give the whole world; thus the enemy said to the Redeemer in the desert: "I will give thee all the kingdoms of the earth if thou wilt fall down and adore me." Hence Salvian justly remarks: "Whoever does not esteem his soul in the manner it deserves, does it a great injury, as the devil makes so much account of it." This being supposed, what a great affair is the salvation of the soul? How great folly it is to sell it to the devil, not for an entire world, but worse than Adam, for a momentary pleasure? It would certainly be a great injury to the soul if man were required to do for it only as much as he does for the body; as the noble soul is the queen and heiress of paradise; and the body, on the contrary, a most vile slave, made of earth; yet, would to heaven that, to save the spiritual life of the soul we were to do half what man does to save the life of the body. If a physician tell a patient to swallow bitter medicine, he does so; to be enclosed in a heated apartment for several days, to have an arm removed, or a foot bled, he submits; but if a priest tell him, for the cure of his soul, to say a short prayer, to fast, to give alms, to make the Spiritual Exercises for a few days, he can do no-

thing of all this, it seems intolerable. O God ! what injustice. To enable the body to live in delight what is not done? what time spent, and labour endured ? For the immortal soul nothing is done. Socrates, the historian, mentions of an aged holy man, named Bambo, that once meeting a vain woman in Alexandria covered with ribands and jewels, walking like a proud peahen amidst the acclamations of the people, Bambo began to weep bitterly : being asked why he wept, he responded : “ I weep for two reasons ; because this person to please the body, is about to lose the soul ; 2. I am reflecting that I do not for God and the soul the half of what she does for the world and the body.” Man not only prefers the body to the soul, but to please the body, abuses the benefits received from the soul. Sight is derived from the soul ; yet, by unchaste looks, man wounds the soul. The motion of the tongue arises from the soul ; yet with blasphemies it offends the soul. Hearing comes from the soul ; yet, by listening to murmuring, it transfixes the soul. O lamentable abuse !

When we speak of saving the soul, we do not mean that of a friend, or connexion, or father ; we mean your own soul : this most important affair entirely concerns yourself ; for this reason the apostle says : “ *Fratres, rogamus vos, et obsecramus in Domino Jesu, ut negotium vestrum agatis.* ” “ Brethern, we pray and entreat you in the Lord Jesus, that you attend to the business of your salvation,”—(*Thessal. iv.*) If you acquire any other good in the world, either honours, or riches, that good is not entirely yours ; the greater part will belong to your children or heirs .

but if you save your soul, all the good will be yours. "Si sapiens fueris, tibi metipsi eris." "If thou art wise, for thy own self shalt thou be so."—(*Prov.* ix.) Does not this excite you to apply with all your strength to so great an affair? You have great love for yourself, which is admissible, but with reason, procuring for yourself what is most useful and important. "Miserere animæ tuæ placens Deo." I beg of you, with tears, to have compassion on yourself. O God! to what are we reduced. Even to this, that we must use persuasion with man to induce him to love himself well, and that even so we shall not be listened to.

Again the soul of which there is question is not alone your own; it is your only one. "Erue Deus de manu canis unicum meum"—(*Ps.* ii., 21.) If, by misfortune, you lose your soul, you have no other to enjoy God. The father who has an only son, sole heir of his possessions, oh! with what solicitude he guards him! What care he takes of his health if he have a slight illness—how much he makes of it? how many physicians he consults—how many remedies he administers. Why all this? He is the only one; if he lose him, his chief prop is lost, and all the hope of his succession. The soul of man is also the only one: having lost it, all is lost; with what jealousy then should it be guarded. With these sentiments Benedict XII. answered a king, who begged of him an unjust thing: "If I had two souls," said he, "I would give one for that sovereign; having but one, it is not right that I should lose it. "Unum est

necessarium." "One thing is necessary."—(*Luc. x.*) If the soul be lost, it cannot be recovered by giving anything in exchange. "Quam commutationem dabit pro anima sua?" "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Alphonsus of Arrogan having condemned a certain criminal to death, the criminal's sister offered her son instead, saying, "I may have another son, but never another brother." If a man lose his soul, not only has he no other soul to save, but he has no thing to compensate for the loss of his only soul. What a subject for meditation. There is question of saving this only soul, which is eternal: its perdition will likewise be eternal: every other evil in life is temporal; if it were even to last so long as life, it would only be an evil of a few years. To lose the soul is an evil to last for eternity. The angelic St. Thomas observes, that a great and sensible man does not spare any expense for what can only be done once, such as nuptials, or what is to last a long time, as edifices. Who is not aware that the consequences of salvation are eternal? With what attention, then, and solicitude should it not be treated.

Finally, the affair of salvation is the greatest of all affairs, as everything depends on it. Understand it well: were you the most miserable and unfortunate being in the world, save your soul—you will have done all things. On the contrary, were you the richest and most happy person and be damned, you have lost everything. "Quid prodest homini," &c. "What does it avail a man &c." This is the great evangelical truth, with which,

in the University of Paris, St. Ignatius converted St. Francis Xavier. "What will it avail a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What does Lazarus care that he spent the few short years of his mortal life in distress and disease, if he now rejoices in heaven, in the bosom of Abraham, and will rejoice for eternity? What does it avail the glutton to have enjoyed, for a few short years, all the pleasures of the earth, if he is now, and will be for eternity, in the most profound abyss of hell?" Dearly beloved, let us here pause and listen to the voice of God, who thus speaks: "You think only of becoming rich, honoured, learned; if, after obtaining your desire, you are damned, of what use will your riches be?" "Quid prodest," &c. An ingenious Spaniard formed a design, in which he painted a ring without a precious stone, when he added the motto, "The best is wanting." Know, then, that were you in the possession of all the goods of the earth, and lose your soul, the best is wanting, and all is lost. Is it not madness to lose all, for a light and momentary pleasure of the body? It is related that a certain rich man, on his death-bed, left in his will his immeasurable riches to him who, in the opinion of wise men, should be considered the greatest fool in the world. After his death, several in the city pretended to the great inheritance; but, as the testator named the greatest fool in the world, not in the city, the executors had to search in various countries. Having arrived at a city in India, they saw in the midst of a great crowd, a miserable man loaded with chains, whom they were conducting to an elevated scaffold, to be

there tormented with excessive torture, and finally executed. They inquired who he was; being answered he was the king. "What! the king," said they, astounded. "Know," added the citizens, "this is our custom, to elect annually a new king; he only is chosen who is contented to reign but one year, with the express contract of being afterwards tormented and executed in the manner you are now going to witness." The astonishment of the strangers increasing, they added: "Is it possible any one should be found, who, for one year's reign, chooses such horrible torments and death? If such a person exist, who can deny that this is the greatest fool in the world? Oh! then, let all the rich inheritance be given to him." Be the truth of this tale what it may, it is certain, that whoever does not care about losing his soul, with an eternal death, amidst eternal torments, for the enjoyment, not, indeed, of one year's reign, but of brief worldly pleasures, he is certainly the greatest fool the sun ever saw. What do you say, my soul? What do you resolve? Is it possible that the light of so clear a truth should not recall your senses.

SECOND POINT.

The Success is most Difficult.

The affair of salvation is of so great importance that, even were the success most easy, we should, nevertheless, live in the greatest apprehension and solicitude, for even the remote peril of not gaining what is of so great consequence. If, several thousand persons being assembled in an extensive

place, an angel from heaven should descend and exclaim: "In one hour, one here is to die suddenly;" would not every heart beat at this intelligence, saying within itself: "It is true, amidst so many, it would be severe that I should be the unfortunate person; but, as I may be the individual, that suffices to perplex me?" How much greater, then, must be the apprehension and fear of a Christian, reflecting that it is most difficult to be saved, so much so, that it is not one only who is lost amongst so many, but that the many are lost, and few are saved. "Many are called, but few are chosen."

Father Anthony Baldinucci, a celebrated missionary of the Society of Jesus, was preaching in one of his missions, in the diocese of Veletri, to an immense audience, collected in an extensive field, surrounded with high trees, which, with luxuriant foliage and extensive branches, obscured the rays of the sun—it was in the month of April—when suddenly, the preacher stopped, and profound silence prevailed; the father, in an ecstasy, remained immovable, with his eyes raised to heaven, and his arms extended. At this sight, the astounded multitude could not imagine what had happened to the holy preacher, who, after some time, returned to himself, exclaiming in a strong and fearful voice: "My people, think well of salvation, for a great many are damned. God recently opened the eyes of my mind, and I saw souls fall into hell, in as great numbers as the dry leaves fall from the trees in winter." The people being horrified at this recital, sobbed aloud; still greater was their dismay when they saw all the

leaves fall from the trees under which they reposed, as if to prove the truth of what the servant of God preached. Ah ! how difficult it is to be saved ! How difficult ! Blind worldlings cannot persuade themselves of it, yet it is the truth.

This great difficulty of salvation proceeds from different causes.

1. The salvation of man depends on two wills ; namely, on the will of God, who assists by his grace and on the will of man, who corresponds with the grace of God. As to the will of God, no one can doubt that we always have sufficient help to be saved. "God wishes all men to be saved." Nevertheless, when man has rejected many graces and calls from God, though it is certain he will not be left without sufficient help, it is not certain, as St. Bernard observes, that God will give him again the great and powerful helps which he abused. We have always reason to fear our will, being inconstant, indocile, inclined to evil, and easily dazzled with worldly pleasures ; thus it is easy to observe the risk to be encountered in the affair of salvation.

The second reason is, because a place resists with difficulty, which has enemies within and without : within, rebellious and tumultuous citizens ; without, a powerful army, that presses and assaults it. Man has within and without him very strong enemies, that seek with all their strength to prevent his eternal salvation : within, he has the tumult of passions, the strength of bad habits, which draw him to evil, bad inclinations, and irregular appetites. He is besieged from without by invisible enemies, the

lemons, who with continual temptations and a thousand stratagems surround him : his visible enemies are, so many scandalous companions, so many dangerous occasions, which frequently shake the virtue of the most constant. See the difficulty of salvation, surrounded as we are by such terrible besiegers

Finally, the third reason is, that the fortunate or unhappy issue of our salvation depends on the one sole moment of death which, takes place but once. "O moment on which eternity depends!" At that extreme moment, man has to pass from time to eternity ; if this be not happy, he falls without reprieve down the eternal precipice. Oh ! what alarm ! what dismay ! A soldier condemned with other accomplices to play at dice under a scaffold, with this condition, that if he should fail, he should be hanged—O God ! with what fear does he shake the dice in his hand ; with what fear does he not throw them on the table, reflecting that his life or death depends on a moment. Should we not be horrified and agonized, thinking that our life, our eternal death depends on the sole moment of death. This great thought caused the primitive saints of the Church to tremble. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi died as she had lived, a saint : she had so joyful a countenance, so peacable a soul exhaling so many sweet affections to her celestial spouse, that she occasioned a holy emulation in the witnesses of her death. Suddenly, she became sad, her countenance became pale, and turning to her confessor, with a trembling voice she said : "Father, father, do you think I shall be saved ?" The confessor,

dismayed at this question, answered: "Oh! how can you doubt of it, after having led so innocent and penitential a life? How can you doubt that God, who enriched you with so many special favours in life, should fail to conduct you to the eternal joys of heaven?" "All that is true," answered the saint, trembling and weeping, "all that is true, however, I am not secure. What do you think then—shall I be saved?" Ah! what, then, is to be thought of certain worldlings, who enjoy delights, and follow their caprice solely, recite carelessly a few times the "Our Father," and practise a few small acts of devotion, if they expect by these means to get possession of Paradise? Ah! how much they deceive themselves if they wish to purchase heaven at so vile a price. Certainly God will not sell it at so cheap a rate. On the contrary, he has declared, that to be saved is as difficult as it is to find a hidden treasure. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure hidden in a field:" as toilsome as to drag a net to the shore. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a net put into the sea:" as hazardous as to conquer a kingdom. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away.

The simple lay brother, blessed Giles, of the Seraphical Order, by means of acute irony strongly admonished two prelates who lived too much at their ease. Having gone to visit him, they earnestly begged of him to pray to God for them, to which request Giles answered: "What do you want with my poor prayers, when you can pray so much better

for yourselves, since you have much more faith and hope than I have, which virtues are so necessary for prayer?" "How is it possible," they replied, "that such virtues should be more eminent in us, than in you, who are a religious?" Giles continued, "Do you not believe and hope to be saved?" "Certainly," they responded. "Then," added the saint, "you have more faith and confidence than I have, since you, having riches, honours, and pleasures, certainly believe and hope you shall obtain the eternal enjoyments of paradise; and I on the contrary, from so many sufferings, much poverty and want, am in great uncertainty, and fear whether I shall not have to go to eternal torments." With this great lesson he dismissed them, rendering them more careful and timid in the great affair of eternal salvation.

My soul, here enter into yourself, and seriously reflect what is to become of your salvation, if you continue the life you now lead? If to be saved is so difficult to the just, who live remote from dangerous occasions, entirely occupied with God, what will become of those who lead the life of epicureans, only thinking of satisfying their senses and caprices, who do not take one step for God and for eternity? You will say the good thief was saved, though a great sinner. I answer, this was a miracle of the mercy of God, who wished to save him, as St. Bernard says: "*Per compendium salutis.*"—"By an abridgment of salvation." (*Ep. viii.*) And do you wish to found the hope of your salvation on a miracle of mercy, and on this miracle especially,

which, after all, has its alarming feature ; for, mark the circumstances. It was the day when the great sacrifice of man's redemption was offered to the Eternal Father, when Christ was dying on a cross to save sinners. Two sinners were dying on the same Calvary, at the same time, in the same manner, on crosses, by his side. Who would not hope that both sinners would be saved—Of the two one was saved, and one was damned. One saved, that no one may despair—one lost, that no one may presume. God did not give many examples of the wicked repenting and being saved : they wish to enjoy paradise on earth and in heaven, but “the desires of the wicked shall perish :” so agreeable a design will not succeed with them.

THIRD POINT.

The error is without remedy.

We could forgive negligence in the arduous affair of salvation, if, having once failed, the fault could be corrected : this is precisely what is worst and most painful in the affairs of the soul ; the same maxim holds good as in the experiments of war : we cannot err twice as to salvation ; for the first loss is irreparable. If man let his foot slip into the abyss, he cannot return, he has to remain there for ever. If a lawsuit be lost, the loss may be repaired by appealing to a higher tribunal. If riches be lost, they can be regained by new speculations. If health be lost, it can be restored by remedies ; but if the soul be lost, the loss is eternal, irreparable, both with

regard to God and man. With regard to God, for the decree made by him, of the damnation of that soul, is eternal and irrevocable. God wills that the fruit of the redemption should benefit the living, who are travellers on earth, not the dead, who are at the termination of their course ; so that it is said : " Out of hell there is no redemption."

On the part of man, the loss of the soul is irreparable ; during life man can merit or demerit, but being dead in the disgrace of God, " *Tempus non erit amplius.*" " Time shall be no more." He will suffer extremely in hell, but he will not satisfy for his misdeeds. Theologians say, that in hell there is no satisfaction. Oh ! what a great point is this. It should horrify us more than it did the seraphic Teresa of Mount Carmel, who being once seen weeping bitterly, and being asked the reason, replied : " I weep for these three great causes, which, like most acute thorns, transpierce my mind ; namely, one God, one death, and one soul. One God, who being displeased, we have no other to whom we can have recourse. One death, which being once ill made, cannot be repeated. One soul, which being once lost, cannot be regained. One God, one death, and one soul why should you be surprised that I weep?"

If, when one has lost his soul, he could give God something of equal value as its ransom.—But O God ! " What can man give in exchange for his soul?" Hear, O great God of terrible majesty ! hear : this soul is damned for refusing to manifest in confession its hideous disorders : now the soul comes forward to declare them in a public church, to pub-

hish them with the sound of trumpet, and to expose them to the whole world. "No," answers God, "Time is no more." "Tempus non erit amplius." Lord, this soul is damned for usury, now it offers to give all its possessions to the poor. It is damned for indulging too much in the pleasures of the body ; now it offers itself to continual suffering until the day of judgment. "No, no," answers the Lord "Time is no more.!" To repurchase this lost soul, the price of the whole world would not suffice, and the martyrdom of all mankind. What can a man give in exchange for his soul? Oh! what terror, what alarm! King Darius, in his last campaign and battle with the great Macedonian, was not only defeated, but the queen, his consort, was made prisoner. Darius, desirous to send for her ransom as much gold as should be required, was answered by Alexander, that there was not in the world as much gold as would suffice—that there was no other way of ransoming the queen, but by the king's becoming prisoner in her stead. The soul of man was queen and heiress of Paradise: when it was lost by the sin of Adam, to redeem it, it was necessary that the King of Heaven, not only should be girded with cords, but fastened to a cross. St. Bernardino said: "Pro te, anima mea, Deus ipse capitur et ligatur atque pro te vivificanda condemnatur mortem æternæ vitæ." "For thee, my soul, God himself is seized and bound; and to restore thee to life, Eternal Life is condemned to death." If to redeem a lost soul, the infinite price was required of all the blood of a

crucified God, how is it possible that a miserable man can ransom his soul, though he should shed torrents of tears, or surrender his life with the martyrs? What exchange can a man give for his soul? The loss of the soul is an error, which, considered in any light, is irreparable.

If, then, the affair of salvation is so important, is it not a duty that we should apply our thoughts to it with the greatest solicitude? We should suffer for it every inconvenience, even the agonies of death: "*Agonizare pro anima et usque ad mortem certa pro justitia*"—(*Eccl. iv.*, 33): or do we wait to have hereafter an eternal and useless repentance, the evil committed being without remedy?" Oh! if so many wicked wretches, already dead, could raise themselves from their tombs what would they not say? They would utter, with many sighs, "*Ergo erravimus a via veritatis*," "*Therefore we have strayed from the way of truth.*" Miserable creatures that we are, who mistook the road which led to our end. "*Ergo erravimus.*" We minded nothing but the affairs of the world—we thought we did everything in making ourselves rich and great; now, we find that we have done nothing since we have not attained salvation. "*Ergo erravimus.*" How many are there, who cry in despair in hell: "*Nos insensati vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam et finem illorum sine honore.*" "We fools, considered their life madness, and their end without honour." Oh! foolish and blind that we were. Who are they that are called foolish? Who could believe it? A Demosthencs, an Aristotle;

many politicians, who were oracles at court; many persons who, by a miracle of economy, multiplied their rents by the hundred, aggrandized their families, and left their sons heirs to estates: these are all the foolish creatures. "Yes," they respond, "we were foolish for knowing everything else, we were ignorant of what was most important, namely, how to save ourselves. The truly wise were those whom we esteemed ignorant—those simple females, those devout beggars, those rustic monks, who knowing nothing of economy or politics, knew, however, how to gain heaven."

I conclude, beloved, beseeching you with tears, as St. Nilus besought the emperor Otho III., who, as Baronius relates, excited by the fame of the great sanctity in which St. Nilus lived, went to visit him in his poor hermitage: after venerating him as a saint, and imploring the assistance of his prayers, he showed him numerous costly gifts, but the humble servant of God refused each of them. Otho, anxiously requested that Nilus would ask some favour that best suited himself or others. St. Nilus answered, "Oh! yes, willingly, and when your majesty deigns to grant my petition, during life I shall be obliged to you." "Say, then," said the emperor, "whatever you please, for I promise not to deny your request." The saint, then, extending his hand with holy intrepidity, several times shook the purple which Otho had on his chest, saying, "Sire, the favour which I ardently beg of you is this, save your soul, save your soul." This favour I also beg of you, beloved, save your soul.

Reflect in a lively manner, that this is the most important affair that you have in this world. Fix well in your mind this great maxim: "He obtains all, who, losing everything else, is saved; he loses all, who, gaining everything else, is lost."

COLLOQUY.

Most sweet Redeemer; "Deus meus misericordia mea," our last end, first author of salvation (*Ps. lxxvii. 21*); "Deus noster, Deus salvos faciendi," as the Psalmist entitled you; "Deus salutis," as St. Jerome called you, we have recourse to you, bathed in tears, not to ask of you temporal graces for the body, but solely to beg for the eternal salvation of our souls. The soul was created by you for heaven, and in order to save it you have shed all the blood of your veins. Do not permit it to be lost through our wickedness. You see well how dangerous the world is in which we live. It is a sea full of tempests, and rocks, and shipwrecks, of so many temptations, and of so many risks of being lost. Hence we have recourse to you, and we cry out with the holy apostles: "Domine, salva nos, perimus," "Lord save us, we perish." Direct us with your grace, strengthen us with your help, and making use of your infinite mercy, say also to us: "*Ego sum, nolite timere*," "It is I, fear not." This hope we cannot have in our own merits. We have it entirely in your infinite goodness, and in the most precious blood you shed for us: "Qui Mariam absolvisti, et latronem exaudisti, mihi quoque spem dedisti," "Thou who didst pardon Mary, and hear

the robber's prayer, hast given hope to me also." The happy success of our death is in your hands, on which our eternity depends: "Domini, Domini exitus mortis," "The Lord's, the Lord's is the issue of death." Be moved, O good God, with mercy towards us: grant us, through your sole goodness that last final grace, which we cannot merit on any account: "Qui salvandos salvas gratis, salva me, fons pietatis." "Thou who savest gratis those who are to be saved, save me, O spring of piety!" and saved, we shall eternally sing in heaven, and exalt the excess of your infinite mercy: "Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo." Amen.

FOURTH MEDITATION

On the Punishment of Sin.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT was a terrible and exemplary chastisement which God inflicted in the Old Testament, as we read in the Book of *Numbers* xxvi., 4. The Lord wishing to punish the people of Israel for their idolatry, and at the same time, to deter them from falling into the same again, ordered Moses to erect a number of gibbets facing the sun, and on them to hang all the princes and all the leading men of Israel that they might serve as so many trophies of his justice, and memorable instances of his wrath in order to curb all sacrilegious wickedness, not only in those who were present, but even in posterity. Oh! how much more terrible is the catastrophe we have

now to meditate on, which was executed by God himself, not only to punish those who prevaricated, but to strike terror into mankind, that they might not transgress by mortal sin, which alone impedes the acquisition of God, their last end.

God, then, himself, not by means of other ministers, most severely punished in heaven, Lucifer the first of all the angels; in the terrestrial paradise, Adam, the first of all mankind; and on Calvary, the first of all the faithful, the Redeemer, for sins not his own, by means of the Jews. May it please God, that we also may conceive a just and necessary fear at so formidable a thought.

The Redeemer made use of this means to check pride and vanity in the minds of the apostles, who once came to him in great joy, saying: "The devils also are subject to us." Lest they should entertain vain complacency, our Lord reminded them of the fall of proud Lucifer: "I saw Satan, like lightning, falling from heaven"—(*Luc. x.*) If, then, God made use of this thought for the benefit of his apostles, let us also avail ourselves of it for the good of our souls, and, in three points, meditate on three awful theatres of divine justice, namely, Heaven, the Terrestrial Paradise, Calvary. From Heaven, God expelled Lucifer, for one sole sin of thought. In the Terrestrial Paradise, God condemned Adam and Eve to atrocious pains, for one sole sin of deed. On Calvary, the Redeemer died on a cross for the sins of the world, in thought, word, and deed.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see God irritated, seated on a cloud, with a grasped thunderbolt in his hand, chasing away Lucifer and his followers, and precipitating them into the abyss.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say: Great God, of terrible majesty, deign to transfix my obdurate heart with your holy fear; if your benefits will not excite me to serve you well, at least may your chastisement do so.

Ah! my good God, give me light to know well how terrible you are with sinners, and to learn, at the expense of others, how to shun your anger.

FIRST POINT.

The chastisement inflicted by God in Heaven on Lucifer, the first of all the angels, for one sole sin of thought.

The first and most beautiful works that issued from the hand of Divine Omnipotence, were the angels of Heaven; most sublime spirits, the least of whom exceeds in perfection the greatest of all men. Amongst those angels the first place was held by Lucifer, thus called from the brightness of his singular prerogatives, for which he resembled the star Lucifer, which always precedes the rising sun, and follows it setting. He was in so high a place in heaven, that many doctors assert he was more elevated than St. Michael the archangel. Under the figure of the king of Tyre, that eulogium was made in *Ezechiel*, xxviii., 12.: "Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty: thou wast in

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the pleasures of the Paradise of God, every precious stone was thy covering." As Lucifer was the first to be enriched with the greatest gifts of God, so he was the first to exhibit the greatest ingratitude and the most impious felony. God could have said to him, what Jacob said to Reuben, after his sin : " Reuben, my first born, thou art my strength, and the beginning of my sorrow, excelling in gifts, greater in command"—(*Gen. xlix.*) God having kept the angels, after their creation, in the state of probation a short space of time—as theologians say, for a quarter of an hour—Lucifer, abusing his free will, foolishly dared to rebel against his sovereign, and sin grievously against his great benefactor. What sin did he commit? The sin was but of thought. St. Bonaventure believes it to have been of vain complacency, seeing himself adorned with so many sublime gifts. It appears that he explains himself in *Ezekiel xxxiii.* : "Thou hast sinned, and thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty ; thou hast lost wisdom in thy beauty. I cast thee out from the mountain of God ; therefore, I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, to devour thee." Scotus believes it to be a vain pretension—pretending to attain the beatific vision with the strength of nature, without the assistance of grace. St. Thomas says, it was an aversion of God, through pride ; he was ambitious to be on a level with him, saying : " *Similis ero Altissimo.*" However this may be, no sooner had the miserable creature sinned, no sooner had he consented to his proud thought, than God, changing his first love into anger and fury : " Ah ! unhappy

wretch," said he, "away from my sight, go to the abyss, I do not wish to behold you any longer."

1. God punishes him suddenly, without granting him any indulgence, without giving him any time to reflect or do penance for his sin.

The devil once said, by means of a possessed person, that if God would give him a little time to repent, he would wish to do more than all mankind; but this time God has not granted him, and never will.

2. God panishes him himself, notwithstanding the war made with Lucifer by St. Michael, when a great battle was fought in heaven. God himself wishes to show paradise how he can act, armed with thunderbolts against those who rebel. The Prophet David astounded, exclaims: "O great God, how terrible you are? How heavy is your avenging hand?"

God punishes him in the severest manner, without heeding that he was his first work, "*Ipse est principium viarum ejus*"—(*Job xl.*); without having any regard to the nobility of his being; not minding that this was his first fault, and consequently that he was less undeserving of his mercy: he removes the supernatural gifts he had bestowed on him, he degrades him from his dignity, changes him into an ugly dragon, that is Lucifer; he precipitates him from the height of Heaven into the abyss, where he condemned him to eternal torments. What more? He punished with him all his followers, who were no fewer than the third part of the angels, without minding that Paradise should be depopulated, provided the sin

should not remain unpunished. In this world where the guilty are numerous, as it often occurs in rebellions, the heads alone are chastised, or one out of every ten, as Suetonius mentions was the custom of the Roman militia. God did not act thus with the angels; he willed them all to be damned, in eternal pains. O God! what terrors, what thunderbolts are not these of an infinite justice! Let us then, beloved, reflect on this fact, which is of faith—Was it an act of injustice in God, thus to punish Lucifer; or did he act with too great rigour? “Shame,” answer theologians, “these are blasphemies; on the contrary, God chastised him less than he deserved: ‘Citra condignum.’” Perhaps God condemned him to those pains from some sudden movement of passion; as it sometimes happens in this world, that a judge being in bad humour, or being prejudiced by some sinister apprehension, is precipitate in awarding an unjust sentence? No, this is also blasphemy; for God is not subject, as we are, to passion; whatever he does is done with serenity and placidity. If God, judging the sin of Lucifer with all placidity and justice, esteemed it worthy of so great a pain, how great an evil then must sin be? Who is deceived in this, God or man—God, to consider it a great evil, or man to hold it for nothing? Ah! miserable that we are, the mistake is ours, for certainly God cannot be deceived. How many balances then has the divine justice in heaven? Has he two, one to weigh the sin of the angels, and another to balance the sins of mankind? Oh! no, answers the pontiff St. Sixtus,

the same God is the same judge of angels as of men : the same scales serve for the one and for the other. " If it be so," says St. Bernard, " judge of it yourselves." *Sermon in Advent* : " Si superbientibus angelis Deus non pepercit, quanto magis tibi, putredo et vermis." " If God spared not angels when they grew proud, how much less thee who art rottonness and worms." If God has punished with so much rigour the most sublime spirit of Paradise, will he forgive you, who are a handful of earth ? Will he pardon you, who are so much more guilty than Lucifer ? He sinned but once ; you one thousand times a thousand. He sinned only by thought ; you by works and words. He, reflects St. Anselm, offended God only as his Creator ; you offended him as Creator and Redeemer. He, in sinning, pretended to become similar to God, but he did not condemn him ; you, in sinning, despised him, postponing him to creatures. By chastising the angels, Heaven was almost empty, and God did not heed it. If you are damned, Paradise will lose little or nothing. Will God act towards you, vile worm of the earth, with that regard which he had not for the first princes of the earth ? Imagine you see a great king seated at table, ask for a drink ; instantly a massive golden cup is presented to him, filled with the best wine. Before partaking of it, the king views the wine ; seeing a small fly in it, he sickens, loathes it, and in a rage, throws the wine and golden cup out of the window. Shortly after he again asks for a drink, and an earthen vase, filled with miry water, is presented to him. What

then will the king do? If with so much fury he threw out the golden cup, because a small fly was in it, what will he now do with the earthen vase?

The angels in heaven were as golden vessels, on account of their nobility and charity. Because God saw in them an atom only of sin of thought, he cast them into the abyss. Men are as vases of soiled clay; "*Lutea vasa portantes*," filled with the filth of a thousand sins: what then will God do with them? This great thought caused St. Gregory to shed torrents of tears, when he said, *De malis Ang.* "Quos Deus de cœlo præcipitavit, ut in lapsis angelis disceret homo quod timeret; nam quid de æreo vase fiet, si nec aureis superbiæ fœtore plenis ignoscit?" "Whom God hurled from heaven in order that in the fallen angels man might learn a lesson which should inspire him with fear; for what will become of the vessels of brass, if he pardons not even the golden ones when full of the filth of pride?"

Let us reflect that the sin of Lucifer, which caused him to suffer so many pains, was his first and only sin, and was only of thought; without execution. Ah! where are those who make so little account of sins of thought, and scarcely make any examination on them and hardly ever confess them? Ah! where are those who, abusing divine goodness, say by word of mouth, or in the heart: What great thing is it for once, and not more, to give way to passion? for once only God will forgive. Ah! wretch, God did not forgive the sin of Lucifer, though only of thought, and will he easily forgive your first fault? Oh! how many sinners have been deceived by this vain

hope! It is true God has acted so with many, but not with all. How great folly then is it to run the risk of being suddenly damned, by committing the first fault, a thing which has happened not only to Lucifer, but to a thousand others. Witness the painful fact related by Father Engelgrave of a young student, who was found in the morning suddenly dead in bed, having been stifled by vomiting blood. His afflicted parents immediately informed his confessor, one of the fathers of the Society of Jesus, who, having shown great sentiments of grief, began to console himself and others, saying: "Blessed is he! he will certainly be saved, for I knew his conscience perfectly, also his piety, and I can attest he was an angel. However, I wish to offer immediate suffrage for him by celebrating." Having proceeded to the sacristy, and being vested, as he was going into the church he felt himself dragged by his sacred vestments to impede his progress. He turned back, and not seeing any one, he concluded he was mistaken, and returned to the church, but was again retained. Being astonished, he knew not how to proceed; when behold, a black hand appears in the air, and impetuously snaps the chalice out of his hand. Raising his eyes he saw in the midst of flames the unfortunate youth, who, having uttered a most horrible cry: "Ah! father," said he, "do not celebrate for me, for by the just judgment of God I am damned." The poor father was near dying with horror. "What!" said he, "were you not good and innocent? Or did you conceal from me in confession some grievous sin?" "No, no, father,"

answered the youth ; “ I was always good and innocent, as you knew me to be ; I never concealed any sin in confession, yet learn precisely what occurred. Last night before I went to sleep I was assailed by a violent temptation to impurity : I strongly resisted it by fervent protestations. A short time afterwards I was again more strongly attacked, and I overcame by recurring to the assistance of the Blessed Virgin and the saints. Finally, the third time the temptation was so strong, that I fell and consented for once only to commit a sin of impurity. Shortly after, by the just judgment of God, being afflicted with a violent suffocation of blood, I miserably lost both the life of the body and that of the soul.” After this speech he disappeared, leaving the father half dead with terror.

We should observe, although the sin of Lucifer appears less grievous, being only in thought, yet, considering its quality and circumstances, it is worthy of the greatest punishment.

1. Being a sin of pride, sovereignly hated by God, and, as St. Thomas teaches, “ the greatest of all sins ;” for in all other sins man swerves from God either through ignorance or weakness, or allured by some good ; but pride directly opposes God.

2. The sin was committed by a spirit more noble and more gifted by God, his ingratitude was then strangely magnified.

3. He sinned in so holy a place as Paradise, so he merited this pain. “ In terra sanctorum iniqua gessit et non videbit gloriam Dei.”—(*Isa. xxvi., 10.*)

"In the land of saints he has wrought iniquity, and he shall not see the glory of God."

4. It was a sin of scandal, which caused the third part of the angels to prevaricate. "*Caudo ejus trahebat tertiam partem stellarum*"—(*Apoc. xii.*) We should hence learn to conceive a holy fear of God, a sovereign horror of sin, particularly of pride. We should imagine our Lord addresses us by St. Luke (*xii.*), where having expressed to the multitude the rigour of divine justice, represented by the tower of Siloe, which in its ruins destroyed eighteen persons, he added: "*Si pœnitentiam non egeritis omnes similiter peribitis,*" "Unless you do penance, you shall all perish in like manner."

Lucifer, like a lofty edifice, by his ruin, caused innumerable angels to precipitate themselves. Let us then learn not to fall into his sin, if we will not fall under the same ruins. "*Cautela minorum sit ruina majorum,*" "Let the ruin of the greater be a caution to the less," says St. Gregory (4 *in lib Reg. c. ii.*) Ah! my God, deign to enlighten us. "*Via impiorum tenebrosa, nesciunt ubi corruant,*" "The way of the impious is dark; they know not when they may fall.—(*Prov. iv.*) Replenish us with your holy fear, strengthen us with your holy grace, and grant that hell may be only for the rebellious angels for whom you created it. "*Discedite maledicti in ignem æternum, qui paratus est diabolo et angelis ejus*"—(*Matt. xxv., 41.*)

SECOND POINT.

Chastisement given by God to Adam, the first of all mankind, for one only sin of deed.

Some may say in their hearts: "It is true God has severely punished the angels in heaven; but he will not act so with men." Who is not aware of his having a particular affection for all mankind even so far as to say: "My delight is to be with the children of men?" Ah! his amorous predilection for man will not allow him to act thus with them. Let us now see how God has acted in chastising the sins of men, and of the first man, Adam, whom God created in the terrestrial paradise, and gifted, as St. Thomas says, with wisdom, grace, and original justice, which comprehends all justice. He created him universal monarch of the whole world, with happiness never enjoyed by any other; for of all other sovereigns some were masters of this or that kingdom, and not more. Adam alone was master of the whole world, which at that period was infinitely happier and more beautiful. Then the heavens were without thunderbolts; beasts without claws; plants without poison; and all creatures, even irrational, punctually obeyed Adam, insomuch that lions and tigers served him like little dogs. "*Præsit piscibus maris volatilibus cœli et bestiis terræ.*" He had no burden imposed on him by God, but one alone, very light—not to eat of the forbidden tree, under pain of being immediately condemned to death. "*Quacumque hora comederis ex eo, morte morieris.*" Who then would not have imagined that Adam was most faithful to God, through justice to

the King of kings, to whom he owed this slight tribute; through gratitude to him by whom he had been benefited, the command being so easy: yet this did not occur. The devil, under the form of a serpent, seduced Eve, then Adam; so that they both ate of the forbidden apple, and sinned grievously against God; and, as Salvian says, the eighth day after the creation of Adam.

Let us meditate at leisure what was the sin of Adam; let us weigh its grievousness by the standard of moral theology. There is no doubt of its being a mortal sin, being a grievous transgression of the divine commandments; yet among mortal sins, it is of much less weight than others.

1. As to the number, it was only one.

2. As to the matter, it was light; namely, one apple: the subject was not intrinsically bad, but became so by being prohibited.

3. As to the period, it was before the incarnation and death of the Redeemer, consequently it had not the peculiar malice which our sins have, by being injurious to the blood of Christ.

4. St. Thomas reflects that Adam sinned without any experience of the divine rigour; he may have thought that his sin could easily obtain pardon. "*Inexpertus divinæ severitatis credidit illud peccatum esse veniale, idest de facili remissibile.*"

5. St. Thomas notes that he sinned, not to outrage God, but to please Eve, whose sweet entreaties he would not resist. "*Amicabili quadam benevolentia qua plerumque fit, ut offendatur Deus, ne offendatur amicus.*"

Notwithstanding these considerations, which appear to lessen the grievousness of the sin of Adam, observe what was his chastisement. Scarcely had the miserable creature taken the forbidden apple, when immediately God in anger and fury came to the terrestrial paradise to punish him. He did not avail himself of the cherubim armed with fire, who was at the gate of paradise, nor did he make use of any other celestial spirit; but he himself, the great God, with a voice of thunder exclaimed: "Adam, Adam, where art thou?" Adam in dismay takes to flight, and takes refuge in a wood, but whither can he fly? Where hide himself from the anger of God, who, coming before him reproaches him with his felony; despoils him of all the gifts with which he had adorned him; degrades him from the empire of the universe; chases him and Eve from Paradise; curses that ground which sustains him, that in future it should produce thorns and briars; condemns him to death with all his descendants, and sentences him to labour in the sweat of his brow. God, not satisfied with punishing Adam so rigorously in his own person, extends the pain of his sin to all his posterity.

The children of a father condemned for high treason cannot pretend to ancient dignities and dominions: thus Adam having been convicted of high treason, God willed that all his descendants should be despoiled of their original innocence, and condemned to innumerable calamities, under which the world at present groans. "*Posteris indigestæ mortis hæreditatem reliquit Adamus*"—*St. Zeno.*

Cast a glance over the universe; considering so many evils, say with astonishment: All these are the effects of the sin of Adam and fruit of his murderous apple.

A German prince wishing to dissuade an only son, whom he tenderly loved, from the determined resolution of going to war, after uselessly entreating him, with promises and reasons, finally, as a last resource, caused a battle scene to be painted to the life. This large picture he suspended in his ante-chamber, with this motto: "*Fructus belli.*" The fruits of war. So soon as the youth beheld it, being horrified at the bloody massacres represented with so drearily a prospect, he put aside all idea of war.

Consider so many hospitals; what mean so many spasms, ulcers, and agonies? Nothing else but the fruit of the sin of Adam. "*Fructus peccati.*" Consider the galley where so many miserable creatures are loaded with chains, treated like dogs, beaten, fed with biscuit and putrid water; and ask why so many disasters? "*Fructus peccati,*" "the fruit of sin." Consider so many lawsuits at tribunals, variances at courts, so many tears in domestic houses, famines, plagues, earthquakes, thunderbolts, conflagrations, desolation; and ask why all these? "*Fructus peccati,*" "the fruit of sin." O sin, accursed sin! how murderous you are! Reflect that Adam being driven out of the terrestrial Paradise, lived nine hundred years, always weeping and doing penance for his sin; which not sufficing to satisfy Divine justice, the Divine Word became man, and

died on the cross. With all this, after Adam had done nine hundred years' penance, after the blood and death of a God for sin, the penalty due to it still continues in the world. O God! what terror is this! O sin! O sin! My soul, enter into yourself, and bitterly deplore your faults, so much greater than the sin of Adam.

If a person were to show you a small bottle of poisonous liquor, saying he wished to poison the ocean by casting into it only two drops of that liquid, what would you utter? "Oh! what strong poison that must be." How much greater then must be that mortal sin, since one alone, and not the most grievous, would suffice to embitter the sea of the infinite mercy of God! If Adam deserved so many penalties for one sin, how many will you merit for so numerous and enormous sins? You will say you sinned, not heeding the rigours of divine justice, not to outrage God, but not to displease the world. If these excuses did not exculpate Adam, who was the first and most noble of mankind, will they excuse you who have much less merit?

Finally, Adam sinned but once, and he did not persist in his sin: you, on the contrary, hardened and stubborn in malice, committed habitual faults, and almost considered it a necessity to sin. How much greater and more deserving of chastisement was your felony? The angelic doctor proposes a question: At the day of judgment, as the whole world is to be purged from sin by fire, is the terrestrial Paradise likewise to be cleansed from the sin of Adam, and heaven from the sin of Lucifer?

The holy doctor answers in the negative ; for Adam being chased away immediately from the terrestrial Paradise, and Lucifer from heaven, those holy places were not contaminated by their sins. On the contrary, men for a long space of time have infected the earth by their wickedness, and hence it will be necessary to purge it with the fire of the last judgment. My soul, if you for so many years have been laden and infected with so many irregularities, how much more than Adam you merit to be purged by God with the fire of still greater chastisements ?

Finally, though the sin of Adam, seen with others, appears less, considered in its circumstances it is most grievous, and worthy of every pain.

1. Because it was committed by the most noble man, and the most favoured by God, so that his ingratitude was so much the greater. St. Augustine says : " God did not give the angels time or grace after their sin to obtain pardon of it, as he afterwards did to Adam after his sin." Many of the people of Israel committed sin, allured by the Madianite women, yet, when the Priest Phineas, enflamed with zeal to revenge so much mischief, took sword in hand, against whom did he turn it ? Against one only Israelite and one Madianite. Both were murdered in their sin, on account of their being of the first nobility : the Israelite being son of a captain of the tribe of Simeon, and the Madianite, "*Filia principis nobilissimi Madianitarum*," " the daughter of the noblest prince of the Madianites," to show, as St. Peter Damian observes (*l. i., p. 6*), "*Carnales illecebras in eminentioribus personis*

acrius persequendas," "that carnal indulgences ought to be punished more severely in persons of higher rank."

2. Adam displeased God not to displease Eve. "Ne contristaret delicias suas." Thus he committed the greatest outrage to the Creator, postponing him to a most vile creature. "In manu impii statera dolosa," "In the hand of the impious is a deceitful balance"—(*Ose. xii., 7.*)

3. Finally, he was the first of all mankind to give an example to others of sinning. Thus he became guilty of the innumerable sins which were afterwards committed by his descendants. "Necesse erit." Salvian attests it: "ut sit pro tantis reus, quantos secum traxerit in reatum." "It must be that he is accountable for as many as he drew into crime." Ah! if those persons could well understand this, who are the first to introduce into the city certain customs which are the greatest abuses in the world. Ah! miserable creatures, the thunderbolts of Divine justice will fall on them. Ah! my good God, how terrible you are towards sinners: notwithstanding I have so often had the boldness to offend you. Ah! may the infinite mercy of God be a thousand times blessed, that bears with me for so long a time, and expects me to penance.

THIRD POINT.

Chastisement is inflicted by God, at Calvary, on the first of all the faithful—the Redeemer—for the sins of the world.

Among the many thunderbolts which the Divine justice let fall against sin, and the many chastise-

ments inflicted on sinners in Heaven, on Earth, or in Hell, there is not one so striking, and which should cause more horror, than the chastisement inflicted on the Redeemer on Calvary, for the sins of the world. He was the Redeemer, innocence itself, impeccable by nature. He was the only Son of the eternal Father, consubstantial to him. He was a person of infinite dignity. The least outrage of his most holy humanity should be esteemed a greater evil than the ruin of all creatures. Why then did he wish to become security for all mankind and take upon him their sins? "*Peccata nostra ipse pertulit in corpore suo.*" Consider with what severity the eternal Father punished him for sins not his own. He treated him, not as a son, but as an enemy. "*Habuit me quasi hostem suum.*" He condemned him to be born in a stable in the midst of beasts; to live in hardship for thirty years, in the miserable shop of a carpenter. After three years of most laborious preaching, he ordained him to suffer a most atrocious passion of chains, whips, thorns, mockeries, and caused him to die naked on Calvary, on a cross, between two thieves, as the worst malefactor in the world.

Although the same Redeemer had agonized and sweated blood from every pore, foreseeing his future martyrdom; although three times he begged of his eternal Father to have mercy on him—"He prayed a third time repeating the same words." "*Oravit tertio eundem sermonem dicens?*" his eternal Father not only did not grant his petition; but, on the contrary, sent him, in the garden, an angel with a

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chalice of bitterness, and on Calvary, seemed to have entirely abandoned him, so that the Redeemer in his last agony repeated those words: "Deus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?" "My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?"

O God! what more can be said to conceive an infinite horror of sin?

The eternal Father conceived the life of a God well expended, to destroy the sins of the world. He himself punished a Son with so much rigour, in order that sin might not remain unpunished. What more can be said?

The King of Moab formed a most strange and tragical resolution, as related in the Fourth Book of Kings. Finding himself narrowly besieged by three enemies, namely, the Kings of Juda, Israel, and Edom, who surrounded him on all sides with most powerful troops, having in vain attempted other means of becoming free, and not being willing on any account, to surrender to the enemy, he had recourse to one of those means which despair alone could suggest; he attempted to terrify and put to flight the besiegers, by an act of unheard-of ferocity. For this purpose, having gone out on the highest point of the castle, opposite the army of the enemy, he seized by the arm his eldest son, heir to the kingdom, then, unsheathing a sword, he plunges it into his breast, and with a heart, not of a father, but of a murderer, he continues to massacre the innocent child, who falls a victim to his fury. "*Arripiens filium suum primogenitum, qui regnatarus erat in Israel, obtulit eum holocaustum*

super murum"—(4 *Kings* iii.) At this sight, the besiegers were so horrified, that they despaired of obtaining any advantage from so cruel and desperate a man: the siege was soon abandoned, and they all departed. "Et continuo facta est indignatio magna in Israel, statimque recesserunt ab eo, et reversi sunt in terram suam."

What the King of Moab did so unadvisedly, the eternal Father did with most high counsel of Providence, when mankind made war with Heaven by sin; for, having attempted, in the Old Testament, to overthrow human wickedness by means of the deluge, of fire, plagues, famine, and other chastisements, and man still remaining obstinate, in the end He caused his own Son to be crucified on Calvary, a victim to His justice. "Arripiens Filium suum unigenitum, obtulit holocaustum super Calvarium." Human perfidy was vanquished, and the Jews were the crucifiers. "Timuerunt valde, et omnis turba eorum qui aderant ad spectaculum istud, et videbant quæ fiebant, revertebantur percutientes pectora sua"—(*Luke* xxiii.) Oh! what a case! What more can be said to explain the atrocity of sin, than that Divine justice could not be satisfied for the outrage received from sinners, but by the death of a God; and if the eternal Father would pardon the sin of man, he should not forgive the appearance of it in his only Son. "Proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum."

If God had allowed one single wound to be inflicted on the body of Christ, he would thereby show greater rigour, than if he had buried a thou-

sand worlds, and had precipitated into hell all the angels and mankind altogether. The most holy humanity of the Redeemer, united to the Divinity, being of infinite dignity, is infinitely superior to all creatures.

What then was the rigour, to wish to punish sin, not with one, but a thousand blows, a thousand slaughters, even by the death of Christ?

St. Thomas of Villanova exclaims: "Will there be a man so daring, after this reflection, not to be horrified at the sole name of mortal sin?"—(*Ser. 2, Adv.*) This relates to the eternal Father. As to the divine Son, see what hatred he bears sin. He most willingly accepted to lose his life, provided sin should be destroyed.

Sampson never showed in a more lively manner the great hatred he bore the Philistines, than when he did not refuse to die, provided they should be with him, and be buried under the ruins of the temple.. Never did the Redeemer more clearly show the great evil of sin, than when, to give death to it, he did not object to die on a cross.

In conclusion, my soul, discourse thus with yourself: if divine justice has so rigorously punished a God made man, for sins not his own, how then will he treat you, most vile worm of the earth, for so many of your own sins?

If the fire of divine thunderbolts has caused so many flames to arise, to operate on the green wood of the most holy humanity of the Redeemer, what fire will he not inflict on sinners, who, as dry wood, are prepared to burn in hell? "Si hoc in

verdi, in arido, quid fiet?" Had not the Redeemer, while ascending Calvary, reason to say to the Hebrew women who wept for his torments: "Weep not for me; reserve those tears for yourselves, you stand in greater need of them, having much more to satisfy to the divine justice for your own sins!" "Nolite fieri super me, sed super vos ipsas flete."

Ah! my God, what terrors are these for me! The reasons are so clear and striking to persuade me how great an evil sin is, that if I do not surrender, it may with certainty be alleged, that I have either lost my senses or my faith.

COLLOQUY.

Most beloved spouse of my soul, how much do I not owe you for the light you have deigned to grant me in this holy meditation: like a man who is aroused from sleep and opens his eyes to the light, it appears to me, I know what I never knew, namely, the sovereign evil of sin; reflecting on its frightful punishments, I conceive a sovereign horror of sin. "Quoniam iniquitatem"—(*Ps.* 50.) Ah! miserable that I am! how could I have been blind for so many years, so as not to mind what I did in sinning? It is true, Lucifer sinned, Adam sinned; but neither the one nor the other had seen the chastisements of other sins committed before theirs; but I, more wicked, have committed much greater sins, and—what is the height of my iniquities—I have committed them, after knowing by faith the chastisements given by God to creatures so much more

noble than myself ; and whilst actually suffering the misfortunes of the world, I know by experience these were the chastisements of Adam. Oh ! miserable that I am ! I now know my folly : “ *Iniquitatem meam ego cognosco.*” And now that I know them, O my God, what else can I do, than to have recourse to you ? “ *Quid faciam miser ? ubi fugiam ? nisi ad te, Deus meus ?*” I will act as Magdalen did as soon as she was aware of her wickedness : “ *Ut cognovit.*” She wept bitterly, throwing herself at your feet, and with her I will shed tears of lively contrition. Weep, then, my soul, weep for so many past sins, and do not stop sighing day and night, according to the advice of Jeremiah : “ *Deduc quasi torrentem lacrymas per diem et noctem. Non des requiem tibi, neque taceat pupilla oculi tui.*” After the destruction of Jerusalem, it was prohibited to the miserable Jews to enter the temple to weep over their own misfortunes, and once a year it was only permitted them to enter, after sending much money, calling that day, “the day of tears.” But we, after committing so many sins, are not prohibited, but strongly advised to weep. Then, “ *ploremus coram Domino*”—“Let us weep before the Lord.” My God, lover of souls, hear our cries, whilst with tears we humbly implore pardon, pity, mercy. Remember that a God has died for our sins : “ *Respice in faciem Christi tui.*” The dying blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance. The dying blood of Christ cries out pardon and mercy for us : “ *Respice in faciem Christi tui*”—“Look at the face of thy

Christ.” I merit for my sins the greatest chastisement of your justice ; but the blood of Christ does not merit it, which has taken upon itself the punishment of my sins. Then, “ *Respice in faciem Christi tui et miserere mei*”—“Look at the face of thy Christ and have mercy on me.” Amen.

MEDITATION V.

On the malice of Mortal Sin.

INTRODUCTION.

ST. PETER DAMIAN relates a very tragical case of a traveller, who, having strayed for a long time in a dark wood ; grew tired at length, and observing a grassy mound, seated himself upon it to refresh his weary limbs, and enjoy, in the shade of the high beech trees, the warbling of the little birds ; but, O God ! while he thought he was securely seated on a stone, in reality he had placed himself on the back of a formidable dragon, that was there extended and asleep. This monster, finding himself pressed on the back, resists the pressure, arises, and to the inexpressible terror of the pilgrim, raises its horrible head, opens its venomous jaws, and turning its black eyes towards the wretched traveller, catches him in its claws, tears him in pieces, and devours him. A great misfortune, certainly, for this poor person ; but how much greater is that of sinners, who, while thinking themselves in the enjoyment of sweet repose in delights, riches, and the indulgence of their passions, are, without being aware of it, within

the claws of a dragon much more fierce, that gives them the death of the soul, an eternal death, and to crown their misfortune, they are not aware of their miserable state.

As the Philistines first blinded Sampson, then ill-treated him as they pleased, so the devil, before depriving sinners of the life of the soul, blinds them in such a manner, that they no longer see the evil which they commit. Notwithstanding the daily chastisements inflicted by God on sinners, they say: What great harm is it to give way to passion? only considering in sin, the sole appearance of a momentary pleasure, like the fish, says St. Austin, "*Escam devorat, quia hamum non videt,*" that imbibes with the pleasing nectar of a passing delight the murderous bait of its own perdition.

Jeremiah, weeping, exclaims: "Ah! blind and unhappy sinner, open your eyes for once, and consider in the light of faith how great an evil, how murderous a dragon, is that sin, which until now, you have considered a plaything, a nothing: thus you committed it with that facility with which men partake of a drink of fresh water." "*Bibunt iniquitatem sicut aquam*"—"They drink iniquity like water." Deign for once to arouse yourself from sleep and open your eyes: "*Scito et vide, quia malum et amarum est reliquisse te Dominum Deum tuum*"—"Know and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that you should have abandoned the Lord thy God."—(*Jeremiah* ii., 1.) If you but knew the evil of mortal sin. It is the greatest evil in the world, whether viewed with regard to

itself, or to God, or the sinner who committed it. This will be the subject of this most important meditation, in which we shall consider three points.

1. Mortal sin is the greatest of all evils. 2. It is hated by God more than any other evil. 3. It is more pernicious to man than all other evils.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Suppose yourself in the presence of God, as a culprit guilty of grievous crimes, who presents himself to the judge loaded from head to foot with the heaviest chains. Our chains are no other than our grievous sins. Or, let us place ourselves in the presence of God as so many infirm lepers, having our members covered with horrible cancers. Our cancers are our sins, which disgust and displease the eyes of the Most High.

SECOND PRELUDE.

My good God, behold at your feet a monster of felony and ingratitude. I dare not appear before you, seeing myself so disgusting on account of my iniquities; notwithstanding, your infinite goodness animates me; it did not disdain to reanimate the decayed body of Lazarus, though four days deceased. The mercy you now show me in giving me time and light to weep over my sins, makes me hope that you will deign to grant my pardon. "*Ingemisco tanquam reus: culpa rubet vultus meus: supplicanti parce, Deus.*"

FIRST POINT.

Mortal sin is the greatest of all Evils.

Two things, says St. Augustine, (in *Sent.*, 150,) are great in this world, namely, the sovereign good, that is God, and the sovereign evil, that is sin. "Duo sunt; unum summum malum, aliud summum bonum; illud peccatum hoc Deus." God is infinite goodness, in comparison of whom all possible goods are as nothing. Sin is infinite malice, in comparison of which all possible evils are as nothing. Sin is of so much malice, that it comes in contradiction with whom? With a God. Sin is not only the sovereign, but also the only true evil, which should not be committed either to avoid any kind of pain, or to attain any good.

Dragons and toads, how venomous soever they be, are created by God, and exalt his power. "Laudate Dominum de terra, dracones et omnes abyssi" — (*Ps.* clxviii. Not so with sinners: sin is the sole evil: with this exception, there is no evil for the soul. St. Chrysostom feared nothing in this world but sin. Eudoxia, his persecutor, used to say of him: "Vir ille nihil, nisi peccatum timet," "That man fears nothing but sin." It is, finally, an infinite evil, because it is an offence against an infinite God. The angelic doctor attests it (*Co.* 1, 2, *qu.* 87, *a.* 4,) "Ex hac parte est infinitum." You will ask: In what does this great evil, this great venom consist? In a contempt of God. We read in the divine Scriptures: "Ipsi autem spreverunt me," "But they despised me."—(*Isa.* i. ;) "Per prævari-

tionem legis Deum in honoras :” “By violating the law you dishonour God.”—(*Rom. ii. ;*) “Contempsit judica mea, “He despised my judgments.”—(*Ezechiel v.*) By sinning, man contemns God as his master, by not executing his commands. Dixisti, non serviam :” “Thou hast said, I will not serve.” He contemns God as his King, not practising his laws ; he contemns God as his Creator, not acting according to the end for which he was created ; he despises God as his Father, showing himself ungrateful to his love ; he contemns God as his Redeemer, rendering his blood useless for himself ; he despises God as God ; he would destroy his majesty, assuming that he could not, or knew not how to revenge his outrages.

This contempt increases immeasurably by comparison. According to the celebrated definition of St. Thomas, (1, 2, *qu.* 87, *art.* 4,) sin is, “*Aversio a deo et conversio ad creaturam* :” the sinner turns his back on God to follow a most vile creature. Oh ! what an affront. To condemn one prince in order to honour another prince, might have some excuse. If by possibility there could be another God, and by sinning a man should offend one to follow another, this would be supportable ; but to turn one’s back on the one only true God, who should be preferred to a thousand worlds—to please whom ? It is shameful to mention it—a carcass. Oh ! what contempt, what an insufferable wrong—for a handful of barley, or a mouthful of bread. Oh ! incomparable injury, says Jeremiah. “Be astonished, O heavens.

and you, inanimate creatures, be horrified.”—
(*Jer. ii.*, 12.)

This contempt increases to infinitude by the villainess of him who commits it, and by the greatness of him who receives it. This is the theological argument by which the schools prove that sin is of infinite malice, because the injury is so much the greater, inasmuch as he who offers it is less than him who receives it. If a peasant offend another peasant, his equal, or if a prince outrage another prince, the offence could be considered light; but if the peasant offend a prince, the deed is most grievous. If the same peasant offend a king, the fault has no punishment equivalent to it.

Let us then reflect on sin. Who is then the man that offends? A vile worm, a little dust. Who is the offended God? An infinite majesty, the King of kings. Who then can deny that sin is of infinite malice, being an offence offered by a most vile creature to infinite majesty. This then was your boldness, O man: when you sinned you outraged a God. If an ant armed with a bit of straw wished to defy the sun in a duel, what rashness, what folly, would it not be? The audacity of a sinner, without comparison, is greater, who with respect to God, is much less than an ant—a nothing. In sinning, he unsheathes his sword against an omnipotent God: “*Gladium suum evaginaverunt peccatores.*”—(*Ps. xxxvi.*, 14.) God so contemned, cannot but be infinitely displeased.

Finally, he who sins offends God by contempt,

which contains in itself as great multiplicity as there are divine attributes. Hence holy David wept bitterly to have committed more sins than the hairs of the head, or the sands of the sea. "Multiplicatæ sunt super capillosc apitis mei."—*Ps. xxxix.*, 6. Not that his sins were so many as the hairs of the head or the sands of the sea, but each of his sins offending all the divine attributes, contained the malice of innumerable sins. Man in sinning offends in a particular manner the immensity of God, who being in every place is forced to be witness of these outrages.

St. Peter Damian relates (*Opusc.*, c. 32,) of a robber, to whom Jesus appeared in the form of a beggar with long dishevelled hair; he, taking a pair of scissors to remove it, found two eyes at the back of his head; being in great astonishment, the beggar discovered himself. "I am Jesus, who look around every where. I saw the theft which a short time since you committed."

2. The sinner offends the omnipotence of God, using against himself his own gifts, namely, the senses and powers of the soul.

3. He offends the beneficence of God, outraging that God, who has given him a being, who preserves it, who at every moment could reduce him to nothing. Thus the sinner is worse than a rebel. Rebels have not received from their prince either the hand that bears arms, or the arms that are directed against him. When the angel held Habacuc suspended by a hair over the lion's den—"Portavit eum capillo capitissui"—(*Dan. xiv.*, 35)—if Habacuc

had brandish a knife to wound the hand of the angel who sustained him, what folly and monstrous ingratitude would not this be? God sustains the sinner on the verge of hell by a hair, that is by the thread of a most frail life. What rashness then, by sinning, to wound the beneficent hand of God, who preserves him when he could annihilate him or send him to perdition?

4. He offends the goodness of God, who cannot but complain of the wrongs which he receives, saying: What have I done to thee, O man, thus to injure me? on the contrary, what good have I not done thee?

A certain city having rebelled against the Emperor Charles V., a noble chief involved in the sedition went to implore forgiveness, and was so struck with the excessive kindness with which the Emperor received him, that he expired at his feet from pure grief for his felony. Ah! what then should not the sinner do who returns to penance?

5. Not to mention other divine attributes, the patience of God is offended by the sinner, who is so long borne with, who sins so easily, and returns a thousand times to his sin. The most kind-hearted father in the world, after having several times forgiven a worthless son, finally expels him. God does not act thus: he pardons the sinner a hundred, a thousand times, insomuch, that St. Gertrude, having asked him what was the most agreeable manner of praising him, he answered: "*In longanimitate qua peccatorem expecto ad pœnitentiam in vita.*" "In the longanimity with which I expect the sinner to

penance during life." The sinner, however, abuses so much patience, not once only, but a thousand times. Open then your eyes, my soul, and consider what you have done in sinning; "*Scito et vide.*" You, the most vile of creatures, contemned a God, and preferred to him a momentary pleasure; you contemned him infinitely, and offended all his attributes. Contempt is the most jealous offence that can be offered to man, because his honour is wounded, which is more estimable than life itself. Charles VII., King of France, had extraordinary love for one of his great and faithful captains; once excited by curiosity, he said to him: "Do you think it possible that anything in the world could make you rebel against me, who love you so much, and who in return am so beloved by you?" "Yes, Sire," answered the captain, "contempt might, so I hope you will not put me to the trial." If then a private individual would consider himself so much offended by contempt, how much more should a God consider himself outraged? When there is question of kings and sovereigns, every offence given to them by subjects is punished with death.

What punishment do you deserve who outraged the Monarch of all kings? What astonishment did your presumption cause to all Paradise, who witnessed at the same moment God adored by the seraphim, and despised by a vile worm such as you are? Will you say you did not sin through contempt of God, but to satisfy caprice? But that sinful action with which you wish to gratify yourself, was a contempt of God, if not directly, at least

interpretatively, as St. Thomas says (1 l. qu. 73). When a noble son contracts a base alliance, he does so from fancy, not through contempt of his father, who, notwithstanding, considers himself offended in the highest degree. You will ask, "What evil do we offer to God by offending him?" I answer, in effect no harm soever is done against him, for he is not capable of receiving intrinsic injury; but in affection, great evil is proposed by contempt. All the evil a creature can do is effected, that is—to disobey God. What harm is done to a king when his portrait is disfigured, or his laws contemned?

Dishonour, disobedience, and contempt are, however, held as great evils. O my soul, by offending God, you committed the greatest of all evils. If you understand it well, how horrified you must be, and how bitterly you should weep. Lastly, if we consider the malice of mortal sin *as committed by a Christian*, how strangely does its heinousness increase! It is a great evil for a pagan or a Turk to sin, who has not the light of faith, and who has not received from God so many graces: but for a Christian to commit it, born in the bosom of the Church, cleansed by baptism, and sanctified by so many sacraments—that he should fail in the promise made at baptism, entirely to renounce Satan, saying: "Abrenuntio Satanæ et omnibus pompis ejus;" "I renounce Satan and all his pomp;" that he should prove himself ungrateful after so many benefits from God—oh! this is certainly the summit of all evils.

A Christian believes that God, to redeem him,

died for his sins ; yet he does not cease with fresh blows to renew his passion and death, and scourge him again by his dishonesty, crown him with thorns by his pride, and crucify him by his ostentation. Who then can say how much his iniquities are redoubled and increased beyond measure ? St. Augustine said, that for a Gentile's sin one hell sufficed ; for a Christian sinner, a thousand would be wanted. St. Jerome attests that in hell a Christian is much more atrociously tormented than an idolator. For believers, if damned, that cruel furnace, like that of Babylon, "*Succendatur septu-plum,*" is heated sevenfold. Wretched that I am ! how much heavier will our sins weigh in the balance of God than those of others !

SECOND POINT.

Mortal Sin is hated by God more than any other evil.

It is undoubted that the first and infallible rule of the just man is the divine will. Whatever is willed or loved by God, cannot but be good ; and what is hated by God cannot but be evil. To conceive then what a great evil mortal sin is, let us observe how much God hates it.

1. He hates it solely and sovereignly with all the anger of his heart, more than any other evil in the world ; because in every creature, whether asps or toads, God sees some good, and considers some communication of his perfections ; whereas sin is a pure evil, without mixture of any good. "*Malum sine gratia,*" as St. Ambrose defines it.

2. He hates it essentially and through necessity :

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for, as St. Thomas teaches, (1, 2, *qu.* 20, *art.* 1,) "Hatred proceeds from love." Inasmuch then as God loves himself, insomuch does he abominate sin, which directly opposes his love. Besides loving immensely the soul of man, he cannot but hate sin, which makes man his enemy, and does him so much harm.

3. He hates it infinitely, for this is the nature of two opposite terms: in proportion as one approaches the other recedes. Thus one who goes from Naples to Rome, the nearer he approaches the latter, the farther he removes from the former. God then loving himself in an infinite manner, it follows he should infinitely abominate sin, which is contradictory to his love.

4. He hates it eternally; so these two terms, God and sin, throughout eternity cannot be reconciled either by truce or peace. In a fog cold and heat may be united, what is dry with what is damp; but never can supreme sanctity be united with the summit of human malice.

5. He hates it with abomination. "*Cum videritis abominationem desolationis*"—(*Marc* xiii.) He not only contemns sin and the sinner, but those foolish creatures that served the guilty and were instruments of their sins. Thus he commanded Moses (in the 13th of Deuteronomy), in what city soever he discovered the sin of idolatry, he should immediately destroy it with fire and sword. The citizens being put to death, life should not even be granted to the beasts; the entire city should be changed into an eternal sepulchre of its iniquities.

6. He hates it, finally, in union with all creatures in Heaven and on Earth. When a king deprives a person of his favour, and this individual becomes his enemy, he is soon hated by all the courtiers of that king, even by his servants and vassals. Thus the sinner being hated by God, is also hated by Mary, the angels, and saints: also by all creatures, who unwillingly serve an enemy of God, their Master. The sun would refuse to enlighten him, the Earth to support him, the elements would wish him to be fulminated and destroyed.

Let us discourse together, and tell me, beloved, how great an evil must sin be, so hated by God, who cannot err in his high and most just will? Can it be possible that a person will love more than himself that sin which God so much hates? How perfidious and rebellious a servant is the sinner who so much loves that sin which his Master so much hates, to contract a friendship with the devil, the sworn enemy of God? Reflect, that a person after having committed a mortal sin, can say with truth: "I am hated by God; I have God for my enemy."

St. Chrysostom says (*Lib. de Provid.*): "Peccata separant a nobis Deum, constituuntque nobis illum inimicum"—"Sin separates us from God, and makes him our enemy." O thundering sentence, capable of making the hair stand on an end, and of causing the blood to freeze in the veins of every sinner. "He who would not tremble and be horrified at it," says St. Chrysostom, "shows he does not know who God is." "Nescitis quid sit Deus."

(*Hom. 26, ad Popul.*) I have then for an enemy that God who can at each moment strike me with a thunderbolt, or a fit of apoplexy: who, by withdrawing his assistance, can at any instant reduce me to my former nothingness. I have then for an enemy that God by whose omnipotence I am; by whose mercy I merit: by whose patience I am preserved. I have for an enemy the God of all riches: what commerce then can succeed with me? The God of health: what medicine can then avail me? The God of all creatures: who then can screen me from their insults? They can say, now that God is his enemy, let us persecute him. I have God for an enemy. Alas! if a sour look, a harsh word, a suspected aversion from a prince would suffice to take away sleep and life from his vassals, what effect should be produced on a sinner by the declared hatred of the King of kings? To flee the hatred of a prince, it suffices to abandon his dominions, and have recourse to the protection of another sovereign; but he who has God for an enemy, whither can he flee? Though he should hide himself in the heavens, or in a profound abyss, everywhere he finds God, who can "*corpus et animam perdere in gehennam.*" O most terrible sentence, who can think of it without shuddering? A Roman, whose cause was discussed in the senate, having heard he had Tullius for an enemy, and that he would speak against him, in despair committed suicide.

Two gentlemen in Spain behaved with little decorum at church, in consequence of which they received from Philip II. this reprimand: "Do not

appear any longer in my presence." Having returned home they died through grief. A sinner knowing by faith, that he has God for his enemy, who hates him to death, should he not die with terror? Yet so many sinners, with this clear knowledge, not only do not die, but live, laugh, dance, and amuse themselves. O foolish and senseless creatures. Ah! my soul, if this be not folly, what then can we name it?

THIRD POINT.

Mortal sin is more destructive to man than any other evil.

If all tyrants on earth were to conspire against one man, all dragons, snakes, etc., they could not do him so much evil as a sinner does to himself by sinning: they could only take away the life of the body, not that of the soul. All the devils in hell could not do him so much harm, though they should have an unlimited licence from God to injure him as much as they could: they could only incite, not oblige him to sin.

Divine justice cannot, in a direct way, do him so much harm, by all the power of its thunderbolts, for it can never positively will that he should sin, but only permit it. The oracle of Tobias (i., 20.) is true: sinners are the worst and most capital enemies of themselves, as they do themselves every temporal, spiritual, and eternal evil. According to the angelic doctor (2 *quest.* 164, *art.* 1), every actual sin operates the same effects in the sinner, as the original sin did in the first of the human race. The latter injured man in body, soul, and through-

out eternity : actual sin acts in proportion, it brings on him every temporal evil. What is the greatest evil that the most capital enemy, the most cruel assassin can do to man? Steal his riches, destroy his house, burn his farms, wound him in his members, take away his life in the most barbarous manner. Can he do more? No. Cain could not do more to Abel, nor Absalom to Ammon, nor all the tyrants of Rome to so many millions of martyrs.

The greatest of all evils that one man can inflict on another, is the least part of that evil which a sinner does himself, by committing sin, for he renders himself the sport of the revengeful anger of God, who showers on him all kinds of misfortunes and death.

To this end (says *Ecclesiasticus* xl., 9), God sheds so often on this world his formidable punishments, by so many famines, earthquakes, conflagrations, plagues, desolations, to punish rebels. God himself declared, (in *Deuteronomy* xxviii.,) that he would shower on sinners all his maledictions, so that they should never enjoy any good, either in their homes, affairs, or friends.

The true cause of all the misery we see in cities, and of so many lamentations which are daily heard amongst the people, is not the influx of the planets, nor the changes of seasons, but sin. Kingdoms and most august empires are transferred from one nation to another by sins of fraud and injustice. Why do so many sudden and improvident deaths occur so frequently, even to stout youths, in the flower of their youth? On account of sin. This is clearly

seen in what happened to the Emperor Anastasius. One night a person of formidable aspect, who held in his right hand a pen, and in his left an open book, with an angry countenance and terrible voice, exclaimed: "See how, being pained by your misdeeds, I efface from your life fourteen years." Anastasius being terrified, immediately arose, not well knowing to decide whether it was a vision or a dream. In a few days the heavens became cloudy, loud thunder was heard: the emperor, doubtless foreseeing misfortune, took flight through all the apartments of his palace, and went to conceal himself in a secret cabinet: there precisely a thunderbolt fell from heaven, to terminate his life and wickedness. If sinners are found, who prosper in the world with the goods of fortune, this is precisely the summit of their own evils, for God allows them to thrive, like beasts, to conduct them afterwards to the most cruel slaughter. "Quare via impiorum prosperatur?" asked Job, (xxii., 3.) God acts towards the impious, as Abigail counselled David to act with his enemies, namely, to surround them. "Quasi in circulo fundæ."—(1 *Reg.* xxv.) A person with a sling does not throw the stone immediately, but goes round several times, to aim afterwards with greater velocity. In the same manner, (*Ps.* xi.,) "Impii in circuitu ambulant," they are surrounded by God, who defers the chastisement, to give it to them afterwards in a more heavy manner. Sin is the furnace in which the arms of Divine justice are fabricated, to wound the sinner with every sort of temporal evil. Sin is the armory of all

spiritual evils of the soul, which are incomparably worse and of greater number.

1. Mortal sin inflicts upon the soul of man a death so much worse than the natural death of the body, that in comparison the latter may be called the shadow of death. As the body when separated from the soul, is frightful to behold, and decays, so the soul, when separated from God, though it may be that of the gayest and most pompous youth in the world, is more hideous and disgusting before God than a dead dog. It cannot be otherwise, for if one sin committed by the angels, who are most beautiful spirits, rendered them horrible devils, will not numerous grievous sins, committed by a vile creature, render him more odious to God than even the devils?

St. Augustine wept over the corpse of a man dead to God by sin. "*Vivit, sed corpus ejus : mortua est anima ejus,*" "He lives, but it is his body : his soul is dead."

2. Mortal sin destroys the merits of all the good works performed before committing sin, though the sinner, for an entire century, had performed more penance than a Simeon Stylites, or an Hilarion. These good works never revive unless the soul is restored to grace. Oh ! how great a loss, worthy to be lamented with tears of blood. Titus Livius relates of Manlius Capitolinus, a Roman captain, that after having bestowed on the republic so many services, that he acquired the glorious title of Father of the Country, he was accused of a capital offence. In order to defend his life, he carried into the midst of

the senate all the crowns he had acquired by his valour: the naval crown, acquired in conflict at sea; the mural crown, for being the first to make the ascent to the enemy's walls; the castral, for having first rent asunder the trenches of the enemy; the civic, for having saved the life of a Roman citizen in battle; then, uncovering his breast covered with wounds, after so many trials, to which he had been exposed for the good of his country: "Is it possible," said he, "that so much glory should be eclipsed for one only sin?"

O God! how much more harm than this accrues to a soul from one sin, destroying in one moment the merit of many years, as a heavy hail storm does a flourishing vine. "*Hoc sunt peccata lapsis quod grando frugibus.*" A sinful soul may well lament with Jeremiah, (*Thren. i., 12.*) and say of his sin: "Vindemiavit me."

8. Mortal sin deprives the soul of sanctifying grace, which is a supernatural gift of so much value, that each degree of it is worth more than a kingdom, even a thousand kingdoms, as they are merely natural goods. With grace, it also deprives it of infused habits, of the dignity of child of God, and heir of Paradise, so that God immediately effaces its name from the book of life.

It is written of the Emperor Caius, that being one day indignant against his son for a fault he had committed, being troubled for his kingdom, and stamping his feet on the ground, he said: "Non est meus:" "He is not my son, I do not recognise him for such." In the same manner it appears that

God says from heaven to the sinner: "He is no longer mine:" "Non est meus."

4. Sin deprives the soul of quiet and peace, produces most cruel remorse, which embitters every enjoyment of the sinner; so that even in the midst of feasts and dances, he hears a voice saying to him: "Woe to me, I am in disgrace with God: if a sudden death were to befall me, it is certain I should be damned."

From the time Cain murdered his brother Abel, he was miserable. He no longer found peace; he wandered over the country, a timid fugitive, and knowing that he deserved death by reason of his crime, he feared that all wished to murder him. How vain was this fear? In the terrestrial paradise there was no one but Adam his father, and Eve his mother. What then had he to fear? Could he fear his parents as enemies? No. Yet his fear was not vain, but just; for he was the enemy of the Creator, and hence all creatures were his enemies; and the cruel remorse for his sin made him suspect that the wild beasts, the serpents, and whatever was in the world, would put an end to him.

5. Sin clouds the mind of man, and blinds his reason: thus blind and unreasonable, he resembles an animal more than a man. Lucifer, after his sin, was called the Dragon: "Michael pugnabat cum Dracone." David, after his sin, was aware that he was like a beast: "Tanquam jumentum factus sum." A sinner is even worse than the beasts, for they are not hated by God as the sinner is.

6. Sin renders man worse than a possessed per-

son, for the possessed by the devil in the body; the sinner is possessed in the soul, and by as many devils as he has committed sins : thus he becomes the child and slave of the devil, like a demon incarnate.

7. Finally, to say nothing of other innumerable evils, sin destroys in a certain manner all good in the sinner, so that, properly speaking, he is reduced to nothing. The reason is clear; for the nature or measure, as it were, of existence is the existing thing's relation to the First Being, which is God; and this relation for the sinner is a negative one or nothing—for by sinning he turned away from God. Solomon says (in *Proverbs*,) that sinners are like so many pictures in perspective. In these you will see large fields, thick woods, and delicious gardens; nearer, shepherds, bullocks, droves of cattle, birds, rivers, and rivulets; at a short distance, sea and mountain views, which sweetly beguile the eye; but if the canvass is turned, oh! nothing of all this will be seen; no seas, nor mountains, nor birds, nor flocks, nor rivers, nor trees. This then is the fate of the impious. Before men they appear something great, rich in apparel, retinue, and honours. But reverse the picture, and consider them as they are before God—they are nothing: “Verte impios, et non erunt.”

Besides the temporal evils which sin brings on the body, besides those it produces in the soul, it also gives to the body and soul the completion of all evils; that is, eternal damnation in hell: “Corpus et animam perdit in gehennam.” Of a man who is in mortal sin it may be said, he is suspended in the

air over the mouth of the abyss, which has its jaws open to swallow him. "Super puteum abyssi." He is suspended by a thread; that is, the very frail thread of life: when this is broken, he immediately descends beneath to eternal damnation. O terror, who will not be dismayed at the thought!

Ah! blind, ah! wretched sinner, I ask one favour of you. When the devil tempts you to sin, have at least sufficient judgment to place yourself over the abyss of hell, into which you are about to plunge body and soul, before you resolve to commit the sin: then I am certain you would not be so rash, or rather so foolish, as to commit it. From what has been said, beloved, I should wish you to draw the intended practical fruit of this meditation, namely, a great horror of sin; and that you should reflect in a lively manner, on the horrible change of scene that takes place in the soul which commits sin. A short time before, being in the state of grace, the soul was a child of God, a spouse of Jesus Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost, sister of angels, queen and heiress of paradise, rich in merits and supernatural habits. Having committed the fault, oh! God, what a sad catastrophe! In one moment she loses all; is degraded from her former honours; is odious to God, to the saints, to all creatures, a chained slave of the devil, a living portable hell. "Pones eos, ut clibanum ignis in tempore vultus tui."—(*Ps. xx.*) O God! what a frightful change. "Saltus," says St. Bernard, "de excelso in abyssum; de solio in cloacam, de paradiso in infernum," "A leap from a height into an abyss, from a throne into a cess-pool,

from paradise into hell." St. Augustine cannot refrain from tears at this sight: torrents might be shed on the misfortune of a sinful soul. "Eras sponsa Christi, eras templum Dei, eras habitaculum Spiritus Sancti; et cum dico toties eras, necesse est, ut toties ingemiscan, quia non es quod fuisti;" "Thou wert the spouse of Christ, thou wert the temple of God, thou wert the dwelling of the Holy Ghost; and when I say so often, 'Wert' so often must I needs groan, for thou art not what thou wert." All this occurred, because in sinning you have lost God. Weeping repeat what the miserable Jonas already acknowledged. When he was sailing to Tarsus a great tempest arose, and the mariners cast lots to know "on whose account this evil was upon them, and the lot fell upon Jonas." Then the mariners interrogated him: "Indica nobis cujus causa malum istud sit nobis? Quod est opus tuum? Quæ terra tua et quo vidas," —(*Jon. i., 8.*) "Confess, O unhappy man, who you are? What great evil have you done? Whence do you come? Whither do you go?" "I will briefly tell you," answered Jonas; "neither my country nor profession causes so many evils, but my sin alone, by which I fly from the face of God." How can it be possible that he who is far from God shall not encounter every evil?

To conclude. I beseech whoever reads this to overrun in thought all the years of the past life, and then exclaim: How then is it possible that I committed with so much facility so grievous an evil as that of mortal sin? What! Have I lost my senses? Have I lost faith? What has made

me so cruel an enemy to myself? My sins, as to number, have been countless. I began to sin as soon as I was capable of sinning—from the first use of reason. I then continued, without ever ceasing, always abusing divine patience. Scarcely is there a precept in the church that I have not several times transgressed. I have sinned in every kind of thought, word, and deed: the multitude of my sins, divided amongst many men or angels, would suffice to damn them all. Who knows but, after so many sins, the measure may be filled up, after which God will not give me efficacious grace to be saved? Who knows that for me, “*Venit dies iniquitatis præfinitæ*.”?—(*Ezech. xxv.*) As to the weight, who can tell the grievousness of my heinous sins? How vile they must appear in the eyes of God, if I am so fearful to mention them to a confessor, lest he should be scandalized!

As to the manner, I have sinned, knowing well the evil I have done, contemning the voice of God and the remorse of conscience, when by so many titles I should, more than others, be faithful to God, who has benefited me more than others.

Oh! if God wished to exercise his justice towards me, he could have damned me as often as I committed sin. “*Milles Domine, potuisses me damnare, si voluissess,*” “A thousand times, O Lord, might you have damned me if you wished,” said St. Augustine, weeping. If he has not done so, it has been the excess of his infinite mercy, of which I was unworthy.

Now I understand why the saints had so great a

horror of sin. St. Frances of Rome fainted when she passed by a place where there was scandal given. St. Mary of Oignie flayed her feet, for having inadvertently passed through a street in which dwelt a public sinner. Blessed John the Good, to resist a grievous temptation drove sharp reeds under his nails. Others burnt their fingers. Another bit off his tongue and spat it in the face of his temptress.

O God ! how can I hold in so little account what the saints so much feared ? Wretch that I am ! I have not the lively faith that they had. At length I will execute the beautiful admonition of the Holy Ghost : "*Misere animæ tuæ placens Deo.*" I will have pity on myself, and sin no more. In this case, the interest is all mine, not that of my relatives or friends. It would show great pride if I, who am bound to love my enemies, did not love myself.

COLLOQUY.

My God, my Creator, and my Redeemer, here at your feet is a monster of ingratitude, an abyss of iniquities. I am ashamed to appear before you, so guilty do I find myself of innumerable sins. "*Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco.*" "For I know my iniquity." I am he who dared despise an infinite majesty. Blind as I was, I turned my back on the sovereign good to follow a most vile creature : being foolish, I held for nothing the greatest of all evils—sin ; insensible to so many lights and threats ; rebellious to your love ; ungrateful for your benefits. I know it but too well, and I confess it. "*Iniquitatem meam ego cognosco.*" I would have

done you a great injury, if, after having loved me so much and benefited me, I had not loved and served you in return with the most intense love.

What then would it be, not to love you, the Sovereign Good, and to love that which did me so much injury?—not to serve you, and to serve your enemy the devil? What shall it be, to have sold you, worse than Judas, for a caprice? To have again crucified you, worse than the Jews, not once, but a thousand times, by my sins?

Ah! miserable that I am, what have I done? and how is it possible that I had the heart to commit so grievous sins? Yes, my God, I deserve the greatest punishment for so many iniquities. I have but too well merited those temporal and spiritual chastisements, likewise such as are eternal, which your justice thunders on sinners. “*Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco.*”

Among so many chastisements, that which is most intolerable to me is, to be hated by you and to have you for an enemy. Oh! this punishment, indeed, I cannot bear. In comparison with this, a thousand hells seem to me as nothing. My God, the love of my soul: “*Ne permittas me separari a te*”—“Suffer me not to be separated from thee.”

And what good can I have far from you? and of what use would the friendship of creatures be to me, if I have a God for an enemy?—a God who hates sin. Provided you do not deprive me of your love, punish me with any other chastisement. Demand from me any other satisfaction. I am most ready to give it. I know that you require nothing

more from poor sinners but tears and contrition. Here I am quite contrite, to implore your mercy. Pardon, my God, pardon—"Plus potes dimittere, Domine, quam ego committere, plus parcere, quam ego peccator peccare." "You can forgive more, O Lord, than I can commit, pardon more than I, a sinner, can be guilty of"—for so many crimes by which I have offended you. I have recourse to you, who have been offended. Pardon, my God, mercy.

This clear knowledge which you now give me of my wickedness, and this resolution to detest it, these are for me, a pledge of the forgiveness you will accord me. In the meantime I abominate all my past disorders, and myself who committed them, resolving to commence a new life; and with the most lively affection I implore your mercy, in order that you may grant me, with the pardon of my past faults, a strong and powerful grace, never to commit them in future. Amen.

MEDITATION VI.

On venial sin.

INTRODUCTION.

The Jews made use of two sorts of weights and two sorts of scales: one was taken from the Sanctuary, and was true and just: the other was called a public weight, and was very fallacious. The divine Scripture says of Absalom, that when he sold his

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precious hair, he weighed it with the public weight, and sold it for no less than two hundred shekels: "Ducentis siclis pondere publico"—(2*Reg.* xiv., 26.)

With two kinds of scales, then, we can weigh the sins of men. If they are placed in the public balance of sinners, it is deceitful. "In manu impii statera dolosa." The blind world says, that mortal sin is not so great an evil, and that venial sin is light and small—a nothing, and to be made little account of. We sometimes hear these questions: Is this a mortal sin? No. As it is not mortal, it little imports one. O blindness! justly deplored by St. Anthony of Padua: "Multi non ponderant peccata sua pondere Sanctuarii, id est sicut Deus, et sancti gravia putant, sed pondere publico, id est sicut vulgi opinio parvipendit:" "Many do not weigh their sins with the balance of the Sanctuary—that is deem them grave as God does and the saints, but with the public balance—that is, deem them trifles as the crowd does." (*Dom.* 4, *post Trin.*)

Ah! if venial sin is weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary, and with the due estimation in which the just held it, who were enlightened by God and by faith, oh! how grievous it is! So grievous, that St. Catherine of Genoa, considering its deformity, almost died. St. Aloysius, thinking of it, fainted away. It is so grievous, that St. John Chrysostom (*Hom.* lxxxviii., *in Mat.*) makes a very wonderful proposition: "Believe me," says the saint, "although venial sin is, without comparison, less in malice than mortal sin, still it causes greater fear: for mortal sin is a horrible monster, the aspect of which is sufficient

to scare almost all who behold it : whereas venial sin is a hidden poison, which deceives the incautious, and by degrees makes them fall into mortal sin. To undeceive in this respect, this meditation proposes three points :

1. What venial sin is in itself for its intrinsic malice.

2. What damage it does to the soul.

3. What chastisements it receives from God.

According to the angelic doctor (1, 2, *qu.* 88, *ar.* 3), there are two sorts of venial sins : some which are committed through want of consideration, through human weakness, and proceed “*a statu naturæ corruptæ* ;” “*from the condition of corrupt nature* ;” others which are committed with a deliberate will, “*directe proveniunt ab inordinata voluntate* : “*Proceed directly from an inordinate will*,” I intend to treat of the second sort.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine ourselves in the presence of God, like the poor man in the Gospel, who went from Jerusalem to Jericho. Having fallen into the hands of robbers, he was by them despoiled of what he had, severely wounded in several parts, and left in this sad state on the ground ; thus only his life remained.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say from the heart : My God, my celestial Samaritan, from so many venial sins, I see myself despoiled of supernatural goods, and wounded in my powers ; it appears to me that I have nothing left but the sole

life of grace. Ah ! Lord, be moved to pity towards me. "Sana animam meam, qui peccavi tibi : " Heal my soul because I have sinned against thee." With the oil of your inspirations enlighten me to know the evil I have done ; and with the wine of your love render me fervent, that I may no longer despise you.

FIRST POINT.

"He is truly wise," says St. Bernard, "who esteems things as they are."

Let us, then, by the light of faith and with the assistance of theology, see what venial sin is in itself. St. Thomas (1, 2, *qu.* 72, *ar.* 5) says, that mortal sin is an irregularity of the soul, by which, turning from the last end to adhere to some temporal good, the soul loses the principle of spiritual life, which is charity towards God, and grace. By venial sin the soul is disordered in adhering to some worldly good, but not so as to turn from the last end. Thus the vital principle of grace remains : we may say, the soul becomes infirm, but does not die.

This being supposed, I will thus discourse : It is true, venial sin does not condemn God, as mortal does ; but it is also true that it does not hold him in that just estimation which it ought : it does not oppose itself to the divine will ; but in a certain manner of acting, as St. Thomas says, (1, 2, *qu.* 88, *ar.* 1,) "non contra legem, sed præter legem." "Not contrary to the law, but beside the law." It is also true that it disgusts him, not perfectly observing the divine precept. If so, how can it be called light ? This saying appeared to St. Bonaven-

ture to be a blasphemy. In venial sin we have not so much to consider the slight transgression of the divine commandments, as the infinite majesty of God, whose command is not executed with sufficient exactness.

If man do not execute the divine will in a small thing, he commits a fault which has no excuse, for he could easily avoid the fault. It was a greater sin in Adam not to obey God in a slight thing, such as to deprive himself of an apple. For the same reason Naaman was justly reprehended. Having gone from Samaria to the prophet Eliseus to be cured of his leprosy, the prophet, without receiving him, and even without speaking to him, sent directions to him to go and bathe seven times in the Jordan. Naaman was indignant at such a message; but he was thus answered: Sir, if, to be cured from leprosy a very severe remedy had been prescribed, surely you should adopt it: how much more readily should you acquiesce in the slight request to bathe in the limpid waters of the Jordan?

The same motive removes every excuse from the person who commits a venial sin. If to avoid it he had to labour much, or to overcome a great repugnance, he might be compassionated if he failed; but what great strength is requisite to overcome himself in a slight thing? For this reason his fault is inexcusable.

Two things of great import are to be considered in venial sin. 1. The person who is offended, namely, God, our King, Redeemer, Father. 2. The person who offends, that is, a just soul, who by sanctifying

grace is the adopted child and spouse of God. When there is question of a great personage, the least want of respect is a considerable slight. How indignant was Aman, the favourite of King Assuerus, that Mardocheus, who was only a foot soldier, did not salute him! He went so far as to endeavour to have him put to death. An Arabian king condemned to death James Almanzorre, who returned conqueror from Spain, for having related to him jestingly what had happened to him on his route, namely, that having met a little girl alone and wandering in a wood, and having reprehended her for it, she answered: "So long as Almanzorre is a Spanish gentleman, I shall not fear for my virginity"—(*Boter, lib. I., Dict. mir.*) Thus a laugh, more confidential than respectful, before a king, was considered a crime worthy of death. Shall then venial sin, which offends the majesty of God, be considered slight? Ah! it is not so, exclaims St. Bernard weeping, (in *Reg. Monach.*): "Leve numquam est Deum etiam in exiguo contemnere." "It is never a slight thing to despise God even in a trifle." The law of a God so great should be kept as the apple of the eye, to which even a little straw would cause much pain and labour. "Fili, serva legem meam quasi pupillam oculi: "Son, keep my law as you would the apple of your eye." (*Prov. vii., 2.*)

If we consider in God the title of Father, what a disloyal and ungrateful son would he be who should thus express himself: "I will not take away the life of my father, nor even wound him mortally. Oh! no; but I will displease him from morning until

night: I never will do anything to please him; on the contrary, I will always prick and wound him slightly." What an unworthy son would this be? Ah! I am precisely that most ungrateful child to a God who is to me so loving and beneficent a Father. I think nothing of continually displeasing him; he might justly reprehend me: "*Si ego Pater, ubi est amor meus?*" "If I am a father, where is my love?" i. e. the love which is due to me. I have become similar to those Jews who did not crucify Jesus, but ridiculed, beat, and scourged him. Should so much impiety appear to me nothing?

If the person who commits a venial sin be considered, how much the crime increases. It is committed by a just soul, who by sanctifying grace is the friend of God, his spouse, and adopted child. Who is not aware that the slightest displeasure received from a friend—how much more from a spouse or a child—is always more sensibly felt than even grievous offences received from a stranger or an enemy?

The patriarch Jacob could not enjoy peace, as Reuben his eldest son, beloved by him as the apple of his eye, had committed a crime in his house. "*Reuben primogenitus meus, tu fortitudo mea et principium doloris mei maculasti cubile patris tu.*"—(*Gen. xlix., 3.*) The Redeemer at the treason of Judas appeared more displeased with the ingratitude of a person so much indebted to him, than with the treason itself. By the mouth of his prophet he made this complaint: "*Si inimicus meus male dixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique, tu vero dux meus*

et notus meus." "If my enemy had spoken evil against me, I should have borne it verily, but thou my chief and my acquaintance."—(*Ps. liv.*, 13.) Ah! my soul, stop here and reflect that you, who are so much beloved by God, and who have received so many benefits from him, are you so ungrateful as to displease him so often, when he has not given you the slightest displeasure. With what reason does the Lord denominate this sort of displeasure (by *Zacharias xiii.*, 6,) the greatest wound which he receives from his dearest children.

Notwithstanding all these considerations, some will say venial sin is certainly not a grievous fault. 1. I answer, venial sin is not a grievous fault in comparison of mortal sin; but not so absolutely in itself, in so far as it displeases God; as the earth is a point with respect to heaven, but it is not a point in itself, on the contrary it is a vast structure, twenty-two thousand miles in circumference. 2. If venial sin be light as to the fault, who will say that it is light as to evil? Ah! it is so great an evil that to efface it the merits of the Redeemer are necessary. Our Lord has shed all the blood in his veins, not only on account of mortal sins, but also in satisfaction of those that are venial. In the holy indulgences the treasures of the blood of Jesus Christ are applied in satisfaction to the Divine justice for both. Can that be called a small evil which the infinite wisdom of God esteemed worth shedding his blood of infinite price to efface? It is so great an evil that it has nothing worse, mortal sin excepted, and hell. It is even a greater evil than

hell; for, according to Suarez, (*de peccat. disp. 2, sect. 5, num. 18,*) hell being a pure pain, it will be elected in some sense; whereas venial sin being an evil proceeding from a fault committed, cannot be chosen in any case. Venial sin is so great an evil that it ought not to be committed, either to obtain some great good, or to avoid some great evil. If a person by uttering one single lie could save all infidels, and send all the damned to paradise, he should not upon any account say it. O God! what a great evil! How great is my confusion? One single venial sin should not be committed to purchase a kingdom, and I daily commit so many with so much ease, and for what—for a nothing. Oh! confusion.

Finally, even though we were to suppose what in reality is not the case, namely, that venial sin is a slight thing, as well by reason of the fault as of the evil, yet we should reflect on the multitude of these slight faults committed from morning until night.

St. Augustine says: "*Sic non times quando ponderas, time saltem quando annumeras:*" "If you do not fear them when you weigh them, fear them at least when you count them." Ah! if mortal sin is a thunderbolt which kills, so many venial sins are hail-stones which ruin the vineyard of the soul. "*Si non nocent, ut fulmine, nocent saltem, ut grandine,*" Quintilian says (*book IV., chap. xii.*): "If mortal sin is a tempestuous sea which causes shipwreck, many venial sins are like so many drops united together, which in a similar manner cause shipwreck: how this is effected is of little consequence," (*St. Augustine, Ep. 108, ad Seleuc.*) Whether this

happens by a great sea which envelopes, or by many drops enclosed in the keel of the vessel, is of little consequence when the ship sinks. Many venial sins do not form one mortal sin; but many venial sins dispose to mortal sin, and cause the soul to fall into it.

Mino says, in his *Sentences*, every hat has its shade: so every small defect is subject to its particular penalty. The pains of innumerable defects reunited form a great and extreme punishment. Ah! my soul, here weep and lament with the holy penitent David: "Multiplicatæ sunt super capillas capitis mei" "They are multiplied beyond the hairs of my head"—(*Ps. xxx.*, 13.) Ah! if in so many years of my life the venial sins I have committed are more numerous than the hairs of my head, if each of them, even a thought, an idle word, is to receive punishment, how great chastisement I should expect from Divine justice.

SECOND POINT.

What damage venial sin does to the soul.

The evils which venial sin brings to the soul are all great and considerable.

1. The stain, which renders it odious in the sight of God. King Nebuchadnezzar expressly ordered his ministers to choose for pages to remain in his presence, well-formed youths who had no defect nor any kind of stain. "In quibus nulla esset macula"—(*Dan. i.*, 4.) Otherwise they would not be acceptable in his eyes. God likewise wishes for just souls, without stain of guilt; otherwise he regards them with an evil eye and with anger. Men are also

so disposed. If a stain of oil or ink falls on a richly embroidered dress, its value is so much lessened, that, although there should not be any part of it torn, its price is lessened one half. A queen may be the most beautiful and majestic in the world : if she receive the least cut or scar on the countenance, at once the estimation of her beauty is completely lost.

A soul enriched with virtuous habits and supernatural gifts, even with sanctifying grace, though queen and heiress of an eternal kingdom, if stained with a venial fault, immediately becomes displeasing in the sight of God, and so deformed, that God no longer takes complacency in considering it, but contemns it, as we disdain beholding a vile and disagreeable object. Is not this a grievous evil?

What is related of a Spanish lady, named Sancia Carriglia, is memorable. She had attained an eminent degree of virtue by means of that great master of a spiritual life, John of Avila, who was her confessor. Conceiving a great desire to know the state of her soul, she begged of God for a long time to make it known to her. After many penances and prayers offered for this intention, at length one evening, being in her saloon, an angel suddenly appeared to her, dressed like a hermit, carrying in his arms an infant covered from head to foot with small pustules, as if it had the measles, so that it excited compassion and disgust to behold it. Advancing towards the lady, he said : " This is your soul : " and like lightning he disappeared.

The servant of God was so horrified and so wounded with sorrow, that she wept bitterly, saying : " Ah !

miserable creature! what a frightful soul I have!" She thus continued weeping and sighing the whole night. On the following day she went in haste to her confessor, and with sighs and groans related what had happened.

The enlightened director enquired whether the child was living or dead. "Living," answered the servant of God. "Oh!" replied the director, "be consoled: as it was alive, it shows that your soul is living by sanctifying grace. As to its being full of little spots, it indicates that you have many faults and imperfections, which render you displeasing to Almighty God." *Thomas a Kempis*, l. II., c. xxi., *Nierem Dif.*, l. III., c. iii.

Ah! if God showed me my soul, it would appear so monstrous and deformed on account of so many venial sins, that it would terrify me.

2. Venial sin does not dispossess the soul of sanctifying grace, but it prevents actual graces, which our Lord would bestow were the soul faultless. Actual graces are certain illuminations to know what is good—certain efficacious inspirations to the heart to embrace it—compunction, spiritual sweetness in prayer, great courage to resist temptations.

As a father who displeased with his son for frequently disobeying him, does not show him the same marks of affection as if he had been obedient—does not give him amusements or clothing suitable to his taste: so God, indignant for the ungrateful avarice of man, who merely contents himself with not offending him mortally, and nothing more, deprives him, in punishment of his unworthiness, of his most special grace.

How many lament and express surprise at not finding relish in prayer. They pray continually to God and to the saints, and are not heard. Why do they find themselves so weak and fragile at every shock of temptation? Because they are continually displeasing God. How can they ever pretend to extraordinary graces, or that their petitions to heaven should be easily heard? How is it possible that they can stand firm at the assaults of temptation, when they are abandoned by celestial assistance on account of their venial sins? They live in the grace of God; but they lead a life similar to consumptive persons, who are pale, languid, and emaciated, in whom but little life remains.

The greatest damage venial sin brings on the soul is, that it disposes to mortal sin. According to the angelic Doctor, (1, 2, *qu.* 89, *art.* 1,) this occurs in two ways: 1. indirectly; for God withdrawing the more powerful assistance of his grace, the soul remains weak, and easily falls into mortal sin. 2. Directly: from the habit of several times committing slight faults, by degrees the soul is drawn away by evil custom into a great fault. Add what St. Thomas attests, (1, 2, *qu.* 88, *art.* 6, *ad.* 1,) that venial differs from mortal sin, as an imperfect thing in its kind differs from what is perfect—as a small lioness differs from a lion. “*Veniale differt a mortali sicut imperfectum a perfecto, ut puer a viro.*”

Every one avoids having near him for a long period a young lion, fearing the growth of his teeth and nails will endanger life. So every one should remove far from him venial sin, lest, resembling a

young wild beast, it might afterwards become great and dangerous : as the curiosity of Eve degenerated into great disobedience ; too much affection for money in Judas led him to Deicide ; the policy of Jeroboam ended in infidelity ; and the love of Solomon terminated in idolatry. Oh ! what a matter of moment is this !

Woe to you, O sinners, says Isaiah weeping, (vi. 10,) who commit so many venial sins ; you are working a rope for yourselves which will drag you first into mortal sin, and then into hell. “Veh qui trahitis iniquitatem in funiculis vanitatis.” A similitude is drawn from ropes : a few threads twisted together form cords ; these little cords being likewise twisted together form those large cables with which windlasses are turned and ships moved. Sinners, according to the remark of St. Augustine, multiplying venial sins, dispose themselves to mortal sin, which then draw to perdition. My soul, enter into yourself, and reflect on your numerous habitual defects ; fear and tremble. Remember what St. Teresa writes of herself in the thirty-second chapter of her *Life*. Being wrapt in an ecstasy, she was led by an angel to witness the pains of hell. “Consider that abyss,” said the angel ; “see that little vacant place among the damned. Know that if in youth you had not avoided certain venial sins, from these you would have passed to mortal, and from them *here*. You should have had an eternal punishment.” O terror ! O God ! what will become of me if I do not renounce my habitual venial sins ?

My soul, finally, learn to believe wise confessors

when they make great account of what appears to you but of little moment. Ah! how often they act like skilful pilots, who when the ship is sailing in the most prosperous manner, seeing from afar a small cloud in the heavens, cry out: "Gather up the sails quickly; let us recommend ourselves to God, for a great storm is coming on." "Why so?" ask the inexperienced sailors. The pilot replies: "You will soon see from that small cloud will arise whirlwinds, rain, and the whole sea will be in commotion." Such in fact occurs, as happened in the time of the impious king Achab, there having appeared in the heavens (3 *Reg.* xvii., 45,) "*Nubecula parva, quasi vestigium hominis*:" "A small little cloud like a man's footprint;" shortly after. "*cœli contenebrati sunt, et nubes et ventus, et facta est pluvia grandis*:" "The heavens were darkened, and there were clouds and wind, and there was a great fall of rain."

Frequently wise ministers, apprehending from small beginnings the worst consequences, admonish and reprehend. What answer do they receive? The same as certain persons gave in the time of St. Dorotheus: What great thing is this? What great evil is that? Thus they fall into ruin. "*Sic a minimis ad maxima gradatim diabolus dulcit*:" "Thus the devil leads by degrees from the least to the greatest."—(*S. Dorot. ser.* 3.) O deplorable blindness! O pernicious stupidity!

THIRD POINT.

The chastisement which venial sins receive from God.

Punishment is like a shadow which follows the fault. From the size of the shadow we measure the body ; so from the grievousness of the chastisements with which God punishes venial sin, we may clearly conjecture what its malice is. God being infinitely just, he proportions his chastisement ; being infinitely wise, he well knows what that proportion is. Being incapable of human passions, he cannot chastise more than he ought, or through passion, or false apprehension, or from ill-regulated motives, as sometimes happens amongst men. 1. How has God punished venial sin in this life, as related in the old as well as in the new law ? 2. How does he punish it after death in purgatory ?

As to the Old Testament, Moses so much favoured by God, who had constituted him the minister of Pharaoh, by the order of God was going into Egypt to free the people of Israel from slavery. He was met on the road by an angel, who, full of anger, wished to put an end to him. For what sin of Moses did this occur ? Only because he had delayed circumcising his son who was with him ; not because he did not wish to do it, but he deferred it on account of the tender affection which he bore him, which was only a venial sin ; therefore Sephora his wife circumcised him on the spot. Thus the anger of the angel was disarmed.

God sent a prophet to Bethel to king Jeroboam,

with orders not to take refection of any description on the way: "*Non comedes panem, neque bibes aquam,*" — (3 *Reg. xiii.*) which he punctually executed. On his return he met a false prophet of venerable aspect, who deceived him, saying he might come and dine at his house, as it was revealed to him by God that such was his will. The credulous prophet accepted his invitation. What sin did the prophet commit? It was certainly venial, yet immediately God caused a lion to issue forth from the forest that killed him. That it should be understood that this had happened not because the lion was hungry, but from the fault of the prophet, the lion did not devour the body, but guarded it until it was interred. Through curiosity to see the burning of Sodom, the wife of Lot was converted into a pillar of salt. For a vain complacency which king David had concerning his flourishing army, he was punished with plague, which in three days killed 70,000 persons. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were destroyed by fire for having used in the censers unhallowed fire: "*Ignem alienum.*" — (*Levit. x.*) A hundred similar examples are mentioned in the sacred writings.

Many authors remark that God, not having chastised many for mortal sins, is sometimes excited to chastise them for a venial sin added to them, as in the case of Oza, who first sinned grievously, causing the ark to be drawn by bullocks, contrary to the prescription of the law, which required it to be carried by Levites. He was not chastised by God for this. He then sinned venially, sustaining with little reverence

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the ark which was going to fall ; immediately he was punished with death. St. Austin concludes, (*l. 2, de Mir. 8 Scrip.*), "Quoniam sæpe evenit, ut minores culpæ præcedentium peccatorum vindictam incutiant"—(*2 Reg. vi.*) Moses also sinned grievously from diffidence, when (in *Numbers*) God promised him an abundance of meat, he answered : "Sexcenta millia peditum hujus populi sunt, et tu dicis : Dabo eis esum carniū mense integro?"—(*Num. xi., 21.*) Yet he was not punished by God. He then sinned slightly by the tongue, near the waters of contradiction, and was immediately chastised by God. Can then venial sin be thought light, which not only draws on itself the punishment due to its crime, but the punishment also due to so many past grievous sins ? If we read the records of the Church and of the New Testament, we shall find the grievous punishments inflicted by God, even during life, for one venial sin. St. Jerome relates of St. Hilarion, (in the third chapter of his *Life*), that for the distractions which were not sufficiently rejected by him at prayer, God permitted that a devil should scourge him. St. Odo, abbot of Cluni, writes of St. Gerard, count, that God struck him blind for having once fixedly looked on a young girl, (*Life, book I., chap. xx.*) Palladius mentions that a holy man who lived in great austerity was sent from God, by means of an angel, for several years, the whitest bread, which lasted for days. After some time he began to think he was better than others. God immediately punished him, sending instead of white black bread. St. Frances of Rome once suddenly

felt a great blow ; turning round to see who had struck her, she beheld an angel, who, with an angry countenance, said : " I gave you the blow as a punishment for uselessly employing time which is so precious." Similar examples are recorded in sacred history.

The most atrocious pain which God inflicts on venial sin is after death in the other world. It is the opinion of the angelic St. Thomas, (1, 2 *qu.* 87, *art.* 5,) of the seraphic St. Bonaventure, (in 4 *dist.*, 4 *art. qu.* 3,) and the general opinion of theologians, that if a sinner dies without the grace of God, and carries with him to hell mortal sins, also a venial sin not remitted, he shall there suffer eternal pain both for one and the other. The reason is clear, for in hell there is no redemption : there is no remission even of a venial fault, likewise there is no remission of the pain due to it. O venial sin ! how great an evil, if a case may be found wherein it suffers an eternal punishment.

2. Venial sins, for which just souls did not penance in this life, are accounted for by the most atrocious pains of purgatory. If any one while living, having told a lie, was to be thrown into a burning furnace, what terror would it occasion ! yet, he would feel but for a few moments the pain of fire, as he should soon die. What torment then for a soul in purgatory to be obliged to live for a long time in that fire, and in so active a fire, that in Scripture it is called spiritual and the quintessence of fire.—(*Isa.* iv., 3.) A fire so tormenting, that it is the same fire as hell. "Eodem igne," says St. Au-

gustine, "cruciat^r damnatus et purgatur electus!" "With the same fire is the damned soul tormented and the just soul cleansed." With this difference, that the same fire for the damned is eternal ; for the souls in purgatory it is not eternal, but it is immensely prolonged from the desire and hope of seeing God, so much the more, as a soul suffering there has no terrene objects to divert it, nor other affections to engage the heart, but is entirely turned to God, and has no other desire but to enjoy him : this desire not being gratified, it lives in a most tormenting martyrdom. God would wish to have the soul with him in heaven, but he is obliged by his justice to purge it first by fire. If a king, after concluding a marriage with a beautiful young lady, should cause her, on entering the kingdom, to be chained and cast into prison for some fault, who would say her fault was light? God keeps just souls, who are his spouses and destined to reign in Paradise, not only prisoners, but also in torments in purgatory : for what? for venial sins : yet, blind man dares call venial sins slight and of little moment. O folly! The saints, who were enlightened by God, did not so esteem them ; on the contrary, they performed the greatest penances for them. St. Maurice, bishop, for not having given immediate notice for the baptism of a child that died soon, renounced the bishopric, and condemned himself to live always as a pilgrim. St. Eusebius, for a distraction at prayer not well chased away, condemned himself to close his eyes during life to all earthly things. The priest Evagrius, in punishment of a slight detraction, re-

mained forty days and nights without a covering. St. Jerome writes of St. Paula, in his epitaph : “ *Ita levia peccata plangebatur, ut eam gravissimi criminis crederes ream.* ” “ She so bewailed slight sins that you would think her guilty of the most heinous crime. ” — (*Ap. Fabri Do. 5 post Pent., con. 3.*) How can I have so little sense, after committing innumerable venial faults, as to wait to expiate them all in the great fire of purgatory, whilst I am able to expiate them so much more easily in this world? Should I have so little judgment, being able so easily to remedy past venial sins by tears and penance and by caution to prevent them for the future, and not do so?

It is wonderful what every day occurs in the world. If there is question of any bodily ailment, how small soever it may be, it is held in great account, as if it were a sovereign evil. On the contrary, if mention is made of the evil of the soul, if it is not the greatest of evils, it is held for nothing. If a man have a little mole on his face, he cannot suffer that small deformity: he takes advice, and procures every means to be freed from the stain. Should he have a tooth-ache, a cold, a slight fever, doctors are immediately called in, medicines are taken, a rigorous system of diet is observed. Should any one say: “ These are not mortal maladies; there is no danger of losing life: why then use so many remedies?” the answer is: “ These are sicknesses which require attention: they are small evils, but are tiresome, and may degenerate into great evils if not speedily cured.” Ah! holy faith, enlighten the

mind. So much is said and done for the small evils of the body; and what is said and done for the slight faults of the soul? "But here is no mortal sin; we do not for this go to hell: it is then a matter of no consequence." "If it is not a grievous fault, it is a grievous evil." "No matter!" "You will have to satisfy for it in purgatory with a frightful fire." "It is no matter." O folly! O deplorable blindness! Ah! my poor soul, how little are you divested of human feelings! with how little respect to your great dignity are you postponed to the body which is so vile!

COLLOQUY.

Beloved Spouse of my soul, now that I am enlightened by your divine light to know venial sin, the same thing occurs to me as to those who look at the stars through a telescope, and find those planets immeasurable which at first seemed so small.

How then have I allowed myself to be so deceived and blinded by the devil, as to esteem as nothing what was so grievous? and how, being so solicitous for the health of the body that I make so much of a slight illness, am I so negligent for the soul that I have despised the great evil of venial sin, solely because it was not the greatest of evils, such as mortal sin? Ah! unfortunate that I am! what fears will not be mine at the moment of death, if first I have not done penance! I shall be forced to weep with holy David: "Cur timebo in die mala? iniquitas calcanei mei circumdabit me."—(*Ps. xlviii.*, 6.)

Ah! those faults which I contemned and trampled

under my feet as nothing, will inspire me with terror. And what greater horror shall I not feel after death, when I shall be obliged to satisfy in the formidable pains of purgatory, one by one for all my innumerable defects?

O my crucified Jesus ! I embrace your most sacred wounds, and I protest that I wish now to do penance for my sins : now I wish to weep for them most bitterly ; and now humble, contrite, and with tearful eyes, I beg pardon a thousand times. “ *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* ” I have certainly done you a great deal of injury by displeasing your infinite goodness ; but a much greater offence have I been guilty of in thinking little of your displeasure. Ah ! blind and ungrateful that I have been ! Know, however, that in future it shall not be so. I will fly from sin more than from serpents and dragons ; not only mortal sins, but also venial, and the slightest faults ; for I have not courage to embitter any longer your most loving heart, my God, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Father, and my all : and as I am so miserable and frail, oh ! do not permit that I should be separated from you. Strengthen me with your grace : “ *Ne permittas me separari a te :* ” “ Suffer me not to be separated from thee.”

MEDITATION VII.

On purgatory.

INTRODUCTION.

WHOEVER wishes to purchase a house, goes first to see it, and observes attentively, if it is commodious, pleasant, well furnished, and tastefully decorated : otherwise the contract is not concluded.

There are many in the world who, not being willing to do penance for sin in this life, are contented to remain afterwards in purgatory, not for months, but for years ; even, if necessary, till the day of judgment. Provided they avoid hell, they make little account of purgatory. Ah ! miserably blind persons, I beseech of you, before you decide, first look into that horrid prison, in which you are satisfied to dwell. Consider the pains of the suffering souls. Their lamentations for their pains will be a great lesson to you. Their sighs will be your best sermon. While you compassionate their sufferings, they, through gratitude, will teach you the manner of satisfying the debt due to your sins.

As Cain, chastised by God, served as a sign to imprint on others a horror of sin—St. Basil of Seleucia, (*or.* 6,) says, his sufferings were a silent lesson for others—so souls punished by God in purgatory will afford a motive to learn at their cost. Let us act as Job's friends did. Scarcely had they seen him covered with sores, pallid, after losing all his children and goods—obliged to lie on a dunghill, when, struck with horror, they threw themselves on

the ground, and for seven days and nights they did nothing but consider him with astonishment, without saying one word.—(*Job* ii., 13.) How uncivil was this silence ! says Origen—(*book III., in Job.*) Why deny a wretched man the comfort of a sweet word ? He answers : Be not surprised at it, for the profound silence of the friends was not only compassion for Job, but also fear for themselves. They reasoned thus : If Job, who is so just and holy, was tried by God with such strange calamities, what should we not fear who are guilty of so many faults ? We should use the same language, considering with horror the torments of the suffering souls. If these, for slighter faults than mine, weep inconsolably with tears of fire, what shall become of me, who am full of so many faults, and do not think of penance ? Not only, in this holy time of the Exercises, shall I provide for the principal affair of avoiding hell, but for the most important one also of avoiding purgatory, so far as possible.

To this end the present meditation is directed, in which we shall consider—1. The intensity of the pains of purgatory ; 2. The great difficulty of avoiding them ; 3. The importance of avoiding them.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see, near hell, a horrible place full of black and sulphureous flames, and in them innumerable souls not in despair like the damned, but devout, and full of most tormenting hopes of seeing God : they weep and lament in the most in-

consolable manner, and extend their hands to implore our help.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Let us pray ardently for light and grace to efface our sins in this life, that after death we may be freed as much as possible from those flames, and repeat with the heart: "*Complaceat tibi Domine ut eripias me: Domine, ad adjuvandum me respice.*" "May it be thy good pleasure, O Lord, to rescue me; Lord, look back and help me."—(*Ps. xxxix., 14.*)

FIRST POINT.

The intensity of the pains in purgatory.

St. Augustine having heard that some persons in his time said, that, provided they escaped the fire of hell, they cared very little for that of purgatory; being excited by a just zeal, he said to them: "Be silent, and do not in future utter similar folly; for if all the torments were reunited which tyrants have inflicted on the holy martyrs—all the sufferings which executioners have given malefactors—and all the pains of the world, they bear no comparison with the pains of purgatory."

For this reason, the fire which torments suffering souls is precisely the same as that which torments the damned, except the eternity of duration. The holy Church calls the pains of purgatory the same as those of hell. The fire of purgatory is enkindled with an infernal sulphur, and for that reason it is so active that it is not simply called ardent, but spirit

of ardour.—(*Is. iv.*, 4.) It would dissolve a mountain of bronze much more easily than a furnace on earth would consume a straw. Besides its natural activity, it has a much superior power, given by God, who makes use of it as an instrument of his wrath. God says, by Zacharias, that he himself, much more than the fire, will burn and purge elect souls, and with his breath will blow the mantle of their flames.—(*Zach. xiii.*, 9.)

O most terrific fire! Here, then, are tormented for months and for years, not the bodies, but the souls of the elect. The torment, consequently, will be incomparably greater. 1. The soul being more noble than the body, it is infinitely more capable of feeling in a lively manner what is pleasing, as well as what gives pain.

2. While the soul is united to the body, its grief is much restrained by the body, which being gross and heavy, serves as a shield and rampart; but in purgatory, being far from the body, it immediately receives the impression of pain.

3. The soul animating the body, if a pain be in the foot, or if the hand be wounded, the head does not suffer, nor the members that are entire; but in purgatory, the soul being indivisible and separated from the body, it is entirely pervaded with every torment.

Besides, every suffering soul is tormented with more than fire. 1. By reflecting that for such slight things pains so atrocious should be suffered. 2. By considering the folly of having neglected during life to redeem those sins by little meritorious

actions. 3. By seeing the monstrous ingratitude of children and heirs, on whose account the soul is in those places; nevertheless, they live in forgetfulness of its necessities, and being able with a few suffrages to free it from those torments, they omit this duty. Shedding torrents of tears, the soul will grow angry with itself, exclaiming: How foolish and blind I was, being able to expiate my sin by giving in alms what I had acquired by my labours, I preferred favouring ungrateful heirs, who spend my substance, and are unmindful of my pains, wretch that I am! "Oblivioni datus sum tamquam mortuus a corde." —(*Ps. xxx.*, 13.)

Above all the pains in purgatory, every soul is tormented by the privation of the beatific vision. This, indeed, is an excessive pain. St. John Chrysostom said, (*Ho. 24, in c. vii. Mat.*,) that the hell of hells is to be always deprived of God. We can also say, that the purgatory of purgatories is to be long deprived of God.

Thus every suffering soul is made martyr by desire and love; for every soul disengaged from the body, knows much more clearly the goodness of God; thence is moved to desire him with more ardour, and amidst continual sighs and groans, appears unceasingly to repeat the prayer of the blind man in the Gospel: "Domine ut videam:" "Lord, that I may see."—(*Luc. xviii.*, 41.)

Ah! when will that fortunate day come on which the Sovereign Goodness will be unveiled? The soul would wish for the pain of fire to be redoubled, provided the pain of desire should be removed,

similar to Rutilia, of whom the Moralist writes, (*ad Helvid.*, *cap.* xviii.,) who preferred suffering with her exiled son, rather than endure, separated from him, the desire of seeing him.

The soul, however, will be much more crucified by love than by desire, and by three most powerful ardours. 1. A natural love, by which it is carried to God by inclination, as its first principle and its last end, with greater force than a stone descends to its centre, or the flame ascends to its sphere. 2. Supernatural love, by which in the most lively manner it attaches itself to God, as to its sovereign, only, and eternal good. 3. Most ardent charity, well knowing it is to be espoused to the Divine Lamb. "Nuptiæ Agni."—(*Apoc.* xix., 7.) Knowing that as spouse it is destined to an eternal kingdom. "Uxor ejus præparata erat." It sees that its most beloved spouse closes the gates of paradise against it. Its love being thus deluded, it occasions great torment. How long is this great suffering to last? O God! who can say it without horror? For months, for years, sometimes even till the day of judgment.

How much horrified and how tremulous is a malefactor who is consigned to a very obscure prison or to the galleys for three years? How a sick person weeps and laments if the surgeon informs him that he shall have to suffer a most painful operation during a quarter of an hour? Shall not the blood freeze in our veins, reflecting that for so many sins we shall have to suffer inexpressible pains, not for hours or days, but for months or years?

St. Augustine says (*in Ps.* xxxvii.) : "In purga-

torio erit dies unus tamquam mille-anni :” “In purgatory one day will be like a thousand years.” The desire and hope of seeing God, and to pass from excessive torment to excessive joy, will cause one hour to appear longer than a century. This has been attested by many souls from purgatory.

St. Antoninus relates, that a sick person was bed-ridden for a long time, and could scarcely support so great tortures. An angel appeared to him, and in the name of God begged of him to choose either to suffer those tortures for another year, or to stay one half hour in purgatory. “One half hour in purgatory,” said he : “thus my sufferings will soon end.” Having said this, he expired a short time after; and scarcely had he expired, when the angel went to visit him in purgatory. No sooner did the unfortunate man see him, than he said with loud and inconsolable sobs : “Ah! angel, you deceived me—you assured me I should only remain one half hour in purgatory, and I am now burning here for twenty years.” “What are you saying?” replied the angel. “What twenty years! only a few minutes have passed since your death, and your body is still warm in the bed.” So true it is that the pains of purgatory, in a certain manner (“*Sapit naturam æternitatis*”) torment, by the force of imagination, so that every hour appears a century to the suffering soul.

Beloved, let us here pause, and thus discourse. Is it true that purgatory is such as I have depicted, or not? If it be infallibly certain, how, then, can you make so little account of it? Can you err more

strangely than by not believing it? Richeomo relates of a lame man in Arles, that seeing on fire the room where he lay immovable, unable to assist himself, or to receive assistance from others, he made so great an effort that he put all the humours of his body in motion, and in escaping from the burning, all his ailments ceased. Will not you, at the view of the terrible fire of purgatory, which you have so well deserved for your sins, arouse yourself and forsake your evil habits? It was certainly great folly in the relatives of Lot, when their grandfather told them, in the name of the angel, to fly from Sodom, not to be burned by the dreadful deluge of fire, (*Gen. xix.*, 20,) that they made no account of it; thought it silly—that the holy patriarch was raving or joking. What then shall be said of the foolishness of those who, admonished by faith and the minister of the Gospel to flee from the pains of purgatory, hear the summons without profit, as if it were but a jest?

Ah! my God, it is but too true what Osee said, weeping: “Non est scientia Dei in terra”—(*iv.*, 1.) There is not in the world the true knowledge of God and the soul. What then follows? “Maledictum et mendacium et furtum et adulterium inundaverunt:” “Cursing and lying and theft and adultery have grown into a flood.”

SECOND POINT.

The great difficulty of escaping the pains of purgatory.

How great soever an evil may be, if it can be easily avoided, it is much lessened; but if the evil

be great in itself, and should great difficulty be found in avoiding it, this is certainly the greatest of evils. This is precisely the evil of Purgatory, as Cardinal Bellarmine attests, (*de Annis Grat.*, c. xiii.)

Amongst perfect and holy men, very few have succeeded in going straight to Paradise. The same Bellarmine being near his death, having heard from the general of the Society of Jesus, Muzio Vitelleschi, that his most holy and exemplary life gave all hope that after death he should go straight to Heaven. "No," replied the humble cardinal, "I have not this hope."

St. Teresa left in her writings, that, having known the state of many virtuous souls in the other life, she only knew three who went to Heaven without passing through purgatory; which should not occasion surprise, for the reason St. Bernard proposes, namely, that as there is no good which is not sovereignly remunerated by God, so there is no evil, however trifling, which remains unpunished by God.

2. The most holy souls being subject to slight imperfections, they are also subjected to satisfy for them in purgatory. God will not allow a soul to enter Heaven that is not entirely free from the smallest stain! Oh! how acute the eye of God is, to know those slight stains which we cannot discern. Of him it is said, he finds something to reprehend even in the purity of angels: even "the Heavens are not pure in his sight:" even in good works he finds what to judge—"I shall judge jus-

tices," (*Ps.* lxxiv., 3;) so that holy Job feared even his most holy actions were not entirely pleasing to God: "I feared all my works, knowing that you would not spare an offender."—(*Job* ix., 28.) Oh! how terrible are the judgments of God, and how different from those of men! "Man sees but the exterior: God sees the heart."—(*1 Kings* xvi., 7.)

Father Balthazar Alvarez, of the Society of Jesus, confessor of St. Teresa, was, from the testimony of his holy penitent, one of the most holy men who flourished in his time. Having prayed to God to reveal to him how his good works appeared before him, God granted his request, and showed them to him, under the symbol of a bunch of grapes, the greater part of which was decayed, bad, and immature: two or three only were whole, and these were covered with mud. Our Lord said: "Such are your actions. Two or three only are good; and if I examine even these rigorously, they will not fail to be reprehensible."

O God! how rigorous are your judgments in discerning the faults of men! Who can be sure to die so pure that he may have nothing to account for in purgatory?

In the history of the Church many apparitions are related of souls from purgatory, who revealed the pains they suffered for very slight faults. Surius mentions, in the *Life of St. Severino*, on the 23rd of October, that as a cleric was fording a river, a priest appeared before him, and seizing his hand, burnt it, saying: "I suffer this pain for having recited the canonical hours with little devotion."

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The sister of St. Peter Damian revealed to a holy soul, that she was condemned to purgatory for eighteen days, for having, through curiosity, remained in a room to listen to the songs which were being chanted under her windows.

St. Severino, Archbishop of Cologne, was condemned to a most severe purgatory for having recited the canonical hours without due regard to the distinction of time; and this was occasioned by the great affairs at court, for which he esteemed himself sufficiently excused. We read many similar examples in ecclesiastical history.

Let us enter into ourselves, and draw for our instruction that conclusion of St. Antonine, after he had related similar examples to his religious: "*Timeat ergo quilibet peccata venialia etiam committere et commissa non hic purgare:*" "Let each one fear to commit sin, even venial; and to leave unpurged in this world, those which he has committed." If God is so rigorous in punishing the slightest faults in purgatory; if even the most virtuous and holy persons have not succeeded in avoiding purgatory; what will become of me, who for so many years have committed innumerable venial sins, and have not done any penance? I am so delicate, that I cannot bear the prick of a needle: how can I suffer to be scorched in a most atrocious fire? Why then have I so little sense? why do I not conceive a sovereign horror for the slightest fault? why do I omit doing penance for faults already committed? Isaias said: "*Ambulate in lumine ignis vestri et in flammis, quas succendistis:*" "Walk in the light

of your fire, and in the flames which you have enkindled.”—(xl., 11.) Let us avail ourselves of the dark flames of purgatory, that we may be assisted to know the end of Christian penance.

THIRD POINT.

The great importance of avoiding the pains of purgatory.

It is most certain that a soul cannot enter heaven if not entirely free from every stain, and if all debts have not been entirely satisfied for. This being premised, either we are to punish our sins during life, or God will punish them after death. This cannot be avoided, says St. Augustine; with this difference, during life sins are purged by the water of tears and penance; after death they are purged in the burning furnace of purgatory. Is it not better to efface sin with water than with fire? During life one day of penance, even an hour, can satisfy that which could not be remitted with a year's purgatory. Ludolphus applied to this proposition that of Ezechiel: “*Diem pro anno dedi tibi* :” “I have given them a day for a year.”—(iv., 6.) Is it not infinitely better now to suffer a little instead of suffering much in the next life? Besides, the penance performed during life satisfies for sin. The pain of purgatory is a suffering for sin. The satisfaction during life includes merit. He who satisfies after death does not merit anything. One thousand years of suffering in purgatory could not acquire slightest degree of grace, nor any new degree of glory in heaven. Which of the two then are w

choose if we have any sense? Suffering here a little, for a short time, with merit, or suffering there much, for a long period without merit? Finally, Divine justice is much more satisfied with the penance done in life, though small, than with the pain, though great, which is suffered in purgatory; the former being a voluntary sacrifice, is spontaneously inflicted or willingly accepted; whereas the latter is a forced sacrifice, a pain borne by necessity.

For all these reasons it is easy to know how much it imports to satisfy for sin here, where it can be done with so much more advantage, and thus avoid the most atrocious pains of purgatory. Yet there are so many who, being well aware of their numerous sins, still have not the slightest idea of satisfying for them; they eat, sleep, enjoy themselves, and mind every other affair but this. O blindness! O foolishness!

Augustus hearing of the death of a Roman, who, being oppressed with grievous debts, had, however, always lived most joyfully, and without any solicitude: and died in the same manner: "Purchase for me," said the emperor, "at any price the bed of this gentleman, for it must be very soft, its master having slept on it with so many debts, yet so quietly." How much softer must be the bed of those who, having contracted the greatest debts with the Divine justice, notwithstanding, sleep without care, not considering that they have to atone for all in purgatory with the most atrocious torments! O stupidity without bounds! O folly to be lamented with tears.

Let us now come to the practical fruit of this

meditation, and let us resolve to avoid purgatory, by adopting all the means calculated to prevent it as much as possible. The first is to do penance for sins, and to perform all the good works we can, and not place our hope in the suffrages of those who shall outlive us, and let us do so promptly before a mortal accident befall us.

The Disciple relates that a lady was recalled to life to perform the penance due to her faults. She invented the most strange cruelties to torture herself; she lived in tombs, rolled herself in the snow, threw herself on burning coals, tore her flesh with horrible instruments. She would say to those who expressed their astonishment: "Ah! this is nothing in comparison to those pains I suffered in purgatory."

The second is to use all diligence in gaining holy indulgences—a favourite practice with the servants of God, especially when they wished to prepare for death. Little is required to gain an indulgence, and that little will enable us to avoid inexpressible torments. The third is, to be merciful now to the suffering souls, by obtaining for them copious suffrages. God will so dispose persons that the charity we exercise to others will hereafter be exercised by others towards us. The souls that have entered heaven will be most grateful to us. Blessed is the person who has sent even one soul to paradise. Who can doubt of its efficacious intercession before the throne of God for the deliverance of the benefactor who freed it from purgatory? On the contrary, unfortunate are they who have not satisfied the pious duties enjoined by their ancestors. The just

will cry for vengeance before the tribunal of Divine justice against the rapacious usurpers of their labours: "Stabunt justi in magna constantia adversus eos qui...abstuberunt labores eorum;" from purgatory itself they will curse the substance of their ungrateful heirs. In proof of which Benardine de Bustis relates, that a father died, who, by the great acquisitions he made, left his son very wealthy. But the ungrateful man soon forgot his benefactor, without ever thinking of praying for his deceased father, who was burning in purgatory. Although his funds were most ample, yet he remained in the greatest poverty. All misfortunes appeared to conspire against him. Continual tempests desolated his gardens; sudden disasters destroyed his cattle; conflagrations ruined his houses; lawsuits or enemies obliged him to spend all the money he had collected. Driven to despair, he discovered his state to a servant of God, and begged he would pray for him. He did so, and it was immediately revealed to him that the ungrateful son could not enjoy the goods he had inherited, for his father, to whom he did not give any suffrage, cursed him every day from purgatory. His maledictions were executed by Divine justice in punishment of the shameful ingratitude of the son.

Let us now do good to our deceased friends: we shall thus secure it for ourselves. Let us imagine that Jesus Christ says to us on behalf of each of the deceased what he said to Lazarus: "Solvite eum et sinite abire:" "Loose him and let him go." (*John xi., 44.*) Satisfy those legacies which your

ancestors made for the discharge of their consciences, and cause them to enter heaven, and do so promptly. The most benign theologians allow a short space of time; but should not delays be considered inhuman if we reflect on what St. Augustine says, (on *Psal'm lvii.*,) that every hour in purgatory is equivalent to a thousand years of pain.

It is written of Father James Rem, of the Society of Jesus, that every time he passed by a cemetery, which was near his college, he heard arise from those mouldering bones these lamentable voices: "Have pity on us, O Father James, have pity on us!" Let us also imagine that the souls in purgatory cry out to us in a similar manner: "Ah! son, ah! brother, ah! friend, have pity on us." "*Miserere nostri.*"

COLLOQUY.

O God! this great thought confounds me! How frightful are the pains of purgatory! How difficult even for the saints to escape them! and I who have so many sins to atone for, what effort do I make? Not only do I not try to extinguish by penance those inexorable flames which await me, but, on the contrary, I add continually new fuel by repeated and greater sins. If I foresee that I have to suffer some evil, although slight, in this world, I strive by every art to avoid it; and knowing by faith that a most atrocious purgatory awaits me, I do not make the slightest effort to avoid it. Ah! miserable that I am, how shall I ever suffer so cruel a fire, I who cannot bear the slightest inconvenience for my soul?

St. Bernard shed torrents of tears, (*Ser de Quadr.*

debiti;) and without ever ceasing to sigh, he says : “*Exigunt a me præterita peccata mea, ut faciam fructus pœnitentiæ; peccavi enim super numerum arenæ maris, et circumdederunt me mala, quorum non est numerus. Quod ergo sine numero est, quomodo dinumerabo? quomodo satisfaciam, cum cogar reddere usque ad novicimum quadrantem?*” “My past sins require of me that I bring forth the fruits of penance : for I have committed sins greater in number than the sands of the sea. How then shall I count what is countless ; how shall I make satisfaction when I am obliged to restore even to the last farthing ?” If then a saint most innocent, most virtuous, buried alive in a cloister, clothed with sackcloth, and nourished by fasting, weeps and trembles from head to foot, and thinks he cannot satisfy God for his omissions, what can I say, who am guilty of innumerable misdeeds, and have not done penance and do not any penance for them ? Saint Gregory had reason to exclaim : “*Quid faciat virga deserti, ubi concutitur cedrus Paradisi?*” “What can the reed of the desert do when the cedar of Paradise is shattered.”

I am so negligent in atoning for my sins here, hoping afterwards that others will free me from purgatory. How foolish I am ! Have I then lost my senses, to pretend that others will do for me what I do not for myself ? Others will act towards me as I do to my deceased friends, namely, forget them in a few days. What a cross will it be for me in purgatory to reflect that I could very easily have atoned for my sins, and that I did not do so because

most imprudently I wished to confide in those heirs whom I well knew to be often thoughtless and ungrateful! Ah! my God, now by your mercy you give me light to know this truth, give me also the grace to profit well of it. I am resolved to make up my accounts better in future, and from this moment I will begin to do penance for my sins by weeping over them most bitterly. Pardon, my God, pardon, for having offended you so often; mercy, my God, for a poor blind person who has acted without reason. From this day, with your grace, I wish to wash my sins with the water of my tears and not to wait to purge them in the fire of purgatory.

MEDITATION VIII.

On death.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the most pernicious effects of sin is death. "Per peccatum mors."—(*Rom. v., 12.*) Adam sinned, and for this expressly he was condemned to die, with all his descendants. According to the reflection of St. Augustine, although it be the effect and offspring of sin, there is nothing that so much prevents and destroys it, as death well meditated on. Oh! what a great point is this, which strikes the mind with awe more than any other truth.

By faith we believe the other truths—judgment, hell, paradise; but we do not see them. A lively thought of death operates a thousand conversions

and changes of life, and daily fills cloisters and deserts with every description of persons, who, reflecting on the shortness of life, and the vanity of terrestrial things, turn their back to the world, the better to dispose themselves for a happy death. "Mors in nobis operator:" "Death works in us," says the Apostle. (2 Cor. iv., 12.)

Painters representing saints and servants of God, usually draw them with a skull in their hands. Why so? Because almost all who became saints, did so by reflecting that all the world holds in esteem—as honours, riches, pleasures—have an end after a few years of life shall have passed: thus all ends in the grave.

The famous Gerald, a Dominican, reading in the fifth chapter of *Genesis*, of the first men who lived on earth, observed that the life of each of them terminated with this epitome: "et mortuus est." "And he died." Thus Adam lived 930 years, and died. Seth lived 912 years, and died. Enos lived 905 years, and died. And longer than all, Methuselah, who lived 969 years, finally died. Here he closed the book quite anxious and pensive. He thus discoursed with himself: "So the life of nearly ten centuries ends: now it is as if it had never been. What now remains of their ways and riches? Nothing at all. What do I hope for? what do I resolve upon?" He answered: "I am resolved." He abandoned the world, and shut himself up in a cloister, where he died holily.

So it is but too true that death worketh in us. May it please God that we also shall change our

minds in this most important meditation on death. What death shall we meditate on? There are various ways of dying—suddenly of apoplexy; by earthquakes; by shipwrecks. Let us meditate the most placid kind of death—one expected and in a person's bed, that by seeing how terrible this is, we may conclude how much more frightful the other deaths must be. We shall consider—1. what precedes death; 2. what accompanies it; 3. what follows it.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine we are entering a cemetery. O! what horror; here, broken skulls thrown on the ground; there, piles of bones heaped one upon the other; all around, ashes and bones. Then let us say: These were men like myself, and I, one day, and perhaps sooner than I imagine, shall be with them. Here is the end of all their smoke and credit—thus will mine also end. Each of these skulls appears to say: "*Memor esto judicii mei, sic erit et tuum: mihi heri, et tibi hodie:*" "Be mindful of my judgment, so will thine also be: for me yesterday, for thee to day."—(*Ec. xxviii.*)

SECOND PRELUDE.

We shall say to God, weeping with holy David; "Ah! Lord, enlighten my eyes, that I may not sleep in death; so that my enemies may not say they have prevailed against me."—(*Ps. xviii.*) Give me, now, light to know, and grace to execute, what I should wish to have done at the hour of death.

FIRST POINT.

What precedes death.

Many terrific things precede death. First—a certainty that we all must die, this being an irrevocable decree made by Heaven: “Statutum est hominibus semel mori.” “It is appointed unto man to die once.” In other human things some doubt may arise to gain a lawsuit—to be cured of a disease; but with regard to death, no one can say: “Perhaps I shall not die.” Jesus Christ died, the blessed Virgin, the saints, popes, kings, all; thus, we also shall die.

Cæsar Augustus having taken Perugia by force of arms, the citizens, who had rebelled against him, with sighs and groans, begged pardon and life. Oh! no, said Cæsar, shaking his head, and stamping his feet on the ground, oh! no, you must all die, without a single exception: “Moriendum est.”

After the sin of Adam we were all condemned to die, and we shall all die. Guard yourself with the most rigorous diet—have the most expert physician—adopt the most precious antidotes—at last you must die. That day is to arrive for all, in which you will be alive in the morning and dead in the evening, or alive in the evening and dead in the morning. The time will come, when I who am speaking, and you who listen, it will be said of each: Oh! do you not know such a person has passed to another life? This period will befall every individual.

What happens at a game of chess? There were

on the chess-board several pieces of wood, each making a different appearance, kings, queens, noble-men; but the play being ended, all these pieces of wood are thrown in confusion into a small bag, and without any distinction, all are mixed together? Men, whilst in existence, make different appearances; some noble, others plebeians: rich, poor; finally, all die; without distinction, all are to be thrown into a foetid burial place, where their bones and ashes cannot be distinguished from each other.

All have to die. O God! what a thought—what terror. If from among mankind, one should die, without knowing which, certainly all should be solicitous and well disposed; how much greater is the necessity of preparing, knowing we must all die?

If mankind were gifted with immortality, except one, and he should live recklessly, what would be said of him? The same will be said of me, and of every person, who, knowing for certain he shall die, seldom or never thinks of it.

1. Death is preceded by a sovereign uncertainty, how, where, when we are to die. 1. We know not how, of fever or wounds, a foreseen death, or a sudden apoplexy; a shipwreck, a misfortune which frequently occurs; whether of an illness during which our intellect will be unimpaired, or one in which our senses will be disordered; if when the soul is in the state of grace and well disposed, or in the state of sin; of all this we know nothing; "*Nescit homo finem suum.*" "Man knows not his end."

2. We know not when; if at home or abroad;

in a place where we shall be assisted by a priest, or not ; if after placing all domestic affairs in order, or if while involved in hopeless lawsuits. “*Dum adhuc ordiner succidit me.*” If in the midst of great enjoyments like Ladislas, king of Hungary and Bohemia, who married Magdalen, daughter of the king of France, and died precisely at the moment he had sent the most pompous embassy ever seen at court to escort his queen : the intelligence of his death reached France while ladies and gentlemen superbly adorned entered the royal chamber.

3. We know not when. “*Nescitis diem, neque horam :*” “You know not the day nor the hour ;” rather, we know that death will come when we least think of it. “*Qua hora non putatis :*” “At what time you think not.” Oh ! how many weep and despair in hell, for having thought they should live long, and for that reason deferred their conversion to old age : they were suddenly overtaken by death in the bloom of youth, and in the midst of their wickedness. What folly then, securely to promise ourselves a long life, when it does not depend on us, but on God, who has declared that he would shorten the years of the wicked : “*Anni impiorum breviabuntur.*”—(*Prov. x. 21.*) You will say : “Perhaps I shall attain old age ; then I will arrange the affairs of my soul.” Will you then risk your eternity on “Perhaps ?” Rest the most important affair of a man on a doubt ? I will advance farther and assert, not only perhaps, but most probably, you will not attain old age, because experience teaches, that the greater part of mankind die in youth, not

in old age. In a great crowd of persons, how many aged men are there? Very few : then very few attain old age : that truth God wished to teach us from the beginning of the world. The first time death came, there were only four persons in the world. Adam, who was the oldest : Eve, the most delicate : Cain, the most robust : Abel, the youngest. Which, then, of these did death first assail? The youthful Abel : according to the saying of Nissen. "*Immaturæ mortis primitia.*" What folly, not to know the time of our death, to be aware we can die any moment, and not to be always well prepared for death!

3. The last mortal sickness which precedes death. This is often occult and malignant, so that in the beginning it is not considered fatal, but is discovered during the latter days of life. Friends, to keep up the spirits of the sick person, persuade him not to fear ; even the physicians have not courage to speak clearly until the case is totally despaired of ; then, in a few hours, entire provision is to be made for the great affair of salvation, of eternity, and of all the interests of the family.

A general cry ensues : "Haste, haste, send for confessors, lawyers, heirs, friends, quickly ; the sick person will soon be no more, and there is great danger of his losing his senses, and thus be incapable of doing anything." The confessor arrives for the invalid, who, deceived by the hope of his friends and relatives, does not yet know that but few hours of life remain for him. The confessor, with hoity zeal and charity, endeavours to gild as well as he

can the most bitter pill of announcing his death, with the sweetest words: "Sir," he says, "by the fidelity I owe you, I tell you, your sickness increases; should the accident of yesterday return to-day, which I hope not, to-morrow you will be in the other world: you have ever been so wise for all other affairs, you will certainly be much more so for this last affair of your salvation. Have courage then; I am here to assist you; here are the wounds of Christ open for you." Which is as much as to say in plain language: "*Dispone domui tuæ, cras enim morieris.*" What an admonition! O God! what a thunderbolt to a wretched dying person! When Saul heard from Samuel, who was already dead, that on the twentieth day he should die—"Cras tu et filii tui tecum eritis."—(1 *Reg.* xxviii.)—he fell prostrate, stunned and out of himself, nor would he taste any food.

King Ezekiel being admonished of his death by the prophet, cried in despair: "How can that be possible? Have I then to die in the midst of my years?"—(*Is.* xxviii., 10.) Who could have told him that he was in the middle, and not at the end of his days, if not his false imagination? In a similar manner, that he is admonished to die in the best years of his life, when he was on the point of gaining that post, about to settle that son, to increase his revenue, when of all other things, death, precisely, was the least in his thoughts: "*Qua hora non putatis.*" When he felt his conscience more entangled and ill disposed. O God! what pains of parturition will be felt.

A nobleman who was thus circumstanced, being told he was to die : " Ah ! wretch that I am," he answered, " I cannot, I cannot : " he turned the other side, and repeating continually, " I cannot, I cannot," he died in despair. Ah ! unfortunate that I am, will the dying person say : how can I in a few moments, with the head bewildered by fever, make in such a hurry a confession of so many years, so replete with bad habits and scandal ? How shall I make, as I ought, an act of supernatural sorrow ?

He will then be undeceived in what the devil gave him to understand, that he could do at the hour of death what he would not do during life. Finally, the testament precedes death. The confessor having quitted the sick person, the notary will immediately enter with his witnesses, by the entreaties of heirs and interested persons. Having advanced to the patient, he will thus commence his interrogations : " Sir, to what burial place do you leave your body ? " Ah ! what a harsh request ! Into which of the vilest places do you wish your body to go and putrefy, which has been so caressed for many years ? " The dying person has to answer : " In the sepulchre of such a church." The notary proceeds : " Who do you constitute heirs of your property ? how will you dispose of your goods ? " Against his inclination, the dying person begins to utter, with tremulous lips, those dolorous words : " I bequeath : " while pronouncing them, he will say within himself : " Thus end all my labours—all the acquisitions I have made in so many years, with so much prejudice to my conscience. Ah ! how much better it would

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have been for me, had I left with merit, in the hands of the poor, what I now leave, through necessity, to ungrateful heirs. I bequeath my goods to that son, who, I well know, has but little sense, whose morals are not of the best, and who, in a short time, will dissipate all the fruits of my labours. I bequeath palace, gardens, money, rents, furniture, interests : I leave all things." Thus he is despoiled of everything ; having entered naked into the world, naked he must leave it : "*Dives cum interierit non sumet omnia.*"—(*Ps. xiv.*, 10.) The same will happen to him as to a merchant, who being overtaken by a great storm, throws himself into the sea, and with much labour saves his life, laying hold of a deserted rock, where he has nothing, sees nothing, hopes for nothing. In this state St. Augustine approaches the bed of a dying person, and thus interrogates him : "*Ubi est quod amabatis ?*" "Where is what you loved ?" Tell me, my dear sir, are you undeceived as to the vanities of the world ? What have become of all your labours and acquisitions ? Do you not see clearly, that there is nothing else good in this world, but this holy crucifix, which you bear in your hands, and which never abandons you ? How much better would it not have been for you, had you served him, and not the world—had you laboured more to acquire merits than temporal goods !

Now that God gives you light, know well how to profit by it : learn at the expense of others to make in time a good testament for eternity. We read of two testaments in the divine Scripture ; one which (in *Eccl. xiv.*, 19,) is called the Testament of the

world—"Testamentum hujus mundi:" the other David calls the Eternal Testament—"Testamentum æternum"—(*Ps. civ.*, 10.)

Let us reflect on the testament for eternity, of which St. Augustine asks: "Quid Christo relinquis? Quid animæ tuæ?" "What do you leave to Christ? What to your own soul?" What good works do you bequeath for the good of your soul? How important this matter is! There are not a few who, at the moment of death, bequeathing many things, and making agreements for the benefit of relatives, friends, and servants, only omit making a pious arrangement for their own souls. Let us think in time of making our will for eternity.

SECOND POINT.

What accompanies Death.

The dying man having arranged his spiritual affairs with his confessor as best he could, God knows how, and his temporal affairs with the notary: the sickness begins to increase; the symptoms return in a stronger manner; the fever is at its height; and a few hours only are expected of life. The sick person feeling his spirits decline and his agony approach extends himself supinely on the bed, stunned and astounded. Of what does he then think? The unfortunate Absalom died hanging from an oak tree transfixed by Joab with cruel lances.

Three fatal thoughts shall also wound the dying person, namely, the thought of the past, present, and

future. He will consider all his past years, all the pleasures he enjoyed, all the honours he courted; and in that day of knowledge—"in die agnitionis," as was in said *Ecclesiasticus* xxvii., 9—"Oh!" he will exclaim, "how they have passed like a shadow, smoke, wind! All that has happened to me in so many years, appears to me a dream." In his dream he imagines he is conducted to a dark grotto by a magician, who, with a magical wand, having made many circles on the ground, many treasures present themselves before him. Being quite occupied in collecting with both hands, jewels, money, and riches, he awakes, and turning his eyes around he no longer sees jewels or riches, and knows his hands are empty. Ah! this happens to the dying person.

Job (xxvii., 19,) makes a fine comparison: "*Dives cum dormierit, nihil secum auferet aperiet oculos suos et nihil inveniet.*" "When the rich man shall have slept, he will take nothing with him: he will open his eyes and find nothing." All that he has enjoyed in forty or sixty years of existence—all will appear to him as nothing. He will say to himself: Oh! had I abstained from those unlawful pleasures, from these unjust gains, the pain would have already passed, and oh! how happy I should feel! He will run over in thought his past sins, which, being countless, will surround his bed like an army.

The impious king Antiochus, after committing many excesses in Jerusalem, without making any account of their enormity, being come to the point of death, heaved a most profound sigh, which appeared rather like the roaring of despair. "Nunc reminis-

cor malorum, quæ feci in Jerusalem." "I remember now the evil I did in Jerusalem."—(*Mach.* vi., 12.) Ah! now I know well my wickedness, of which I was not aware during life. "Wretch that I am," will each dying person say; "by the last gleam of light, things appear so different from what they previously did. Oh! passion made me consider as innocent sympathy what was profane love, and as just contracts, those which were hidden usury. Ah! in confession I explained my own sins, but not those which I caused in others by scandal and evil counsel."

Thus the past will be a most acute sword, that will pierce the mind and heart of the dying person. The thought of the present will do so much more. The day of death which Job called "*diem perditionis*"—(*xxi.* 30,) a day on which we lose everything altogether, the wretched dying person has to make many most bitter and perpetual separations; he has to detach himself for ever from all his goods, which henceforth can no longer be his, but belong to others. He will cast a glance around his apartment; seeing the desks, looking-glasses, tapestry, it will appear to him that all this furniture repeats to him, in the language of St. Augustine: "*Nos autem non amplius videbis:*" henceforth you will no longer see us, nor will you be our master. Oh! what anguish will this cause in an interested and tenacious soul! With much more pain he will see his bed surrounded by afflicted and weeping children, wife, friends, and the most faithful servants. Reflecting he has to leave them all, never to see them again in this world, he will feel his heart rent asunder.

The Ephesians hearing that the apostle St. Paul was on the point of embarking and departing from them, never more to meet in this world, wept most bitterly, and embracing him in the most affectionate manner, they endeavoured to retain him as long as possible.

What a lively sentiment, then, will that be of a dying person when, turning to his own, he can say : "My children and friends, I shall no longer see you, and you will no longer see me." Finally, he has to separate from his own body, with which he has lived for so many years in so strict a union that they have been as it were but one and the same being, nourished with so much care and delight. "Ah ! my body," he will say, until the day of judgment we shall no longer be together ; you in the interim will go and decay and putrefy in the earth." O God ! what dolours of death will these be !

These pains are sovereignly increased by the snares and temptations of the demons who in that last hour will arouse the passions, in order to drive the wretched person to despair. The devil then seeing but little life remaining, knowing that on this short time the eternity of the dying person depends, tries by all means to overcome him. He acts like a creditor, who, so long as his debtor is in the city, leaves him unmolested ; but, if he ascertain he is to depart, he arrests him, cites him to the tribunal, and obliges him to surrender by hostile means. The devil does not annoy the sinner much who is in health ; but when he is about to depart for the other world, oh ! then, indeed, he tempts him by

the fiercest suggestions. Well knowing the weakest part of his heart, and the temptations with which he has induced him to fall more easily and frequently, with these he assails and combats him with greater facility.

In a letter which St. Cyril wrote to St. Augustine, he mentions having spoken to a man resuscitated through the merits of St. Jerome; and, having heard from him that being near death, so many horrible devils surrounded him, that it appeared as if they were countless. What a conflict, then, will it be to resist so many infernal enemies, especially for those, who, during life, were not used to overcome their temptations, but rather to be overcome by them. It is true, while the sick person is tempted by the devil, he is also encouraged by the assisting priest, who suggests to him fervent acts of piety, inducing him to confide in God, and to recur to the saints. But whoever did not act thus during life, neither will he do it at death, or will do it coldly, repeating "Yes" with the lips, and not with the heart, to the words suggested to him by the confessor. How could you expect a man half alive and stunned by fear, to make these supernatural acts, which, doubtless, he never made when in health?

Cardinal Bellarmine relates, (*de Arte. Moriendi*, l. 2, c. vi.) that, visiting a nobleman when dying, and exhorting him to make an act of contrition, he responded: What means an act of contrition? The cardinal then began to explain it to him; but, he not bearing to hear more about it, added: I do not understand you, this is not the time for such things. Shortly after he expired.

How could it be expected that in an instant he should learn and execute documents given to him by the attending priest—he who never would hear anything of his soul? One who has never learned the use of his sword confronting the enemy, will profit little in after life from a skilful fencing master; he will not know how to execute what he suggests to him. The same will happen at death. One not accustomed to supernatural acts will hear his confessor suggest them to him, but will have much difficulty in eliciting them. With what confidence will he then have recourse to Mary who had but little devotion to her? How shall he be able to invoke the saints who did not observe their feasts, but even blasphemed their name? Finally, when the holy crucifix shall be placed in his hands, O God! how shall he consider those wounds, that blood which he so often trampled on by his grievous sins?

A missionary of the Society of Jesus, having gone to the city of Lucca, to meet an unfortunate person who was to be hanged the following day, found him on his knees in the midst of the prison with a crucifix in his hands, weeping and sighing in so pitiful a manner that the efforts of the zealous father to console him were ineffectual. At length, he interrupted his sighs; with great ardour turning to the father, he said: "You may think I weep through grief of an imminent death; no; I weep solely because during forty years I had no greater enemy than this. Now I find myself alone with this crucifix. For so many years I have disowned it to go after my friends, on whose account I committed those

crimes for which I am to die. Now all have abandoned me. My parents have already disowned me, blushing to be related to a malefactor. My friends, for fear of being thought accomplices in my misdeeds, say they do not even know me. Finally, nothing remains with me but this crucifix, which solely I have offended." Thus speaking, he sobbed still more strongly.

Oh! what different affections and sentiments the dying person conceives when looking at the crucifix. How much more strongly is he convinced of his monstrous ingratitude towards so good a God! Finally, the dying person will be most tormented by the thought of the future—the uncertainty where he is to lodge in the other world, and to know that most probably he shall immediately be thrown into flames. Oh! what terror.

A gentleman when dying, anxiously turning to his confessor, said; "Father, where shall I be to-morrow?" "Where shall you be!" answered he: "I am sorry to tell you, but I cannot betray you; you will be in fire, I hope through the mercy of God that it will be in the fire of Purgatory, but fire it will be." The gentleman began to sob and cry out; Wretch that I am, how shall I suffer so much pain who know not how to bear the prick of a needle? I who am now covered with fine linen, to-morrow I am to burn in ardent flames. Ah! wretch. The dying person will think with horror that in a few hours he will find himself before the terrible tribunal of God, to render an account of many years of a life spent in continual and grievous sins.

If the Abbot Elias, after eighty years spent in most bitter penance, trembled and perspired from fear, what then shall a sinful and disorderly man do? He will above all be appalled by the cruel thought that in a short time he is to receive an irrevocable sentence, which is to last for all eternity, either of extreme joys or extreme torments without medium.

Mahomet II., great lord of the Turks, as glorious for the two hundred cities acquired to the Ottoman empire, as cruel and fierce beyond all belief, reserved for himself a great tract of country for a splendid hunt, with the prohibition that no one under pain of death should fire a shot or wound an animal there. Two of his young sons thinking they were not comprehended in the order, being princes of the blood royal, went to shoot there. The father no sooner heard it than he arrested and imprisoned them, and afterwards condemned both to be hanged, in so determined and barbarous a manner that no one durst ask him pardon. The mufti alone, head of the Mahometan religion, took a favourable opportunity of representing to him that these were the sole heirs of the kingdom. Although he was of an age to have another successor, this was uncertain : in the name of the whole empire he begged of him to leave a successor. The barbarian was dismayed at this appeal, and said : "To succeed to my kingdom one suffices ; let the other then be hanged for a public example. But which shall this be ? The eldest ? I will not select him. The youngest ? Neither : let them draw lots." This being decided, Mahomet seated him-

self in the great divan hall on his throne with formidable majesty. Mutes surrounded him ; the heads of the government, both political and military, trembled opposite the king. Two tables were placed ; one covered with mourning had a scaffold on it ; the other covered with rich brocade, a turban, necklace, and sword were laid on it. In the midst there was a table of dice. The two miserable princes were then called to this most fatal game. They had no sooner witnessed this apparatus, than each fell in a faint from fear. Recovering themselves a little, and taking the dice in hands, O God ! what was their anxiety ! What trembling in the act of throwing them on the table, knowing that on a point, more or less, depended so contrary lots, either to be miserably strangled, or to be emperor of the East ?

Oh ! how much more anxiety must an agonising soul feel, finding itself at the point of death, on which depends for it either an eternal crown of glory in heaven, or eternal torments amidst the horrid burnings of the abyss ! What agony ! what sobs ! what sighs ! when it considers the uncertainty of destinies so contrary. Among these most fatal discourses the last agony of death will arrive. The countenance grows pale, the eyes become dim, the organ of hearing is deafened, so that the priest must raise his voice to be heard ; the nose becomes pointed, the lips black, the chest swells—then the last mortal tear falls from the eyes. The priest having placed the candle in his hands, begins, according to the rites of the holy Church, to entone the “*Profisciscere.*” He will say : “Depart, Christian soul, out

of this world which is no longer for you." Hearing this, he will say in his heart: "O God, after this departure whither shall I go?" "In the name of the Father, who created thee." "Yes, it is true that God created me," he will add, "but I have not executed the end for which he created me." "In the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who suffered for thee." "Yes," will it be said, "but I have not well availed myself of this blood." "In the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee." "Ah! I have not corresponded to the lights of the Divine Spirit." "Go forth, soul, from the body: may the splendid choir of angels receive thee." "Who knows but instead of angels, demons may meet me?" Thus continuing to say the remainder, the dying person will make horrible contortions, rolling the eyes. After long intervals of breathing, doubting whether he is dead or not, the priest exclaims: "Jesus, Jesus," he will breathe his last sigh. Thus ends in one moment all the greatness, riches, nobility, beauty, and science of him who lived for so many years without thinking of his soul, as if he were never to die. O God! what a thought is this? How is it possible that a man gifted with reason, who well knows all this, who so many times has seen it, does not resolve to condemn the world and give himself entirely to God?

THIRD POINT.

What follows death.

Three things follow death : one which concerns the body, the other relates to the soul ; the third regards the goods belonging to the body. These three things holy king David explained when he said : "They shall go into the lower parts of the earth ; they shall be delivered into the hands of the sword ; they shall be the portion of foxes."—(*Ps. lxii., 11.*)

First, the soul having left the body, will go immediately to the tribunal of God to be judged under the sword of divine justice : "*Tradentur in manus gladii.*" The goods which relate to the body, the wolves will take ; that is, greedy and rapacious persons tearing away and stealing some one thing, others, another : "*Partes vulpium erunt.*" "They shall be the portions of wolves." Often they will not wait until the man has expired ; even from the room where he is agonizing they take whatever they can. Robert Lycio writes, that while he was exhorting a dying person to confess, he, perceiving the domestics of the house were searching every corner of the room to take whatever they could find, no longer thinking of his soul, began to weep and cry out : "Oh ! my labours, my riches !" saying this expired. "*Partes vulpium erunt.*"

What will be done to the body ? The body shall enter the lower parts of the earth. Man then shall scarcely have breathed his last ; when his eyes are

closed he is invested with the oldest and ugliest garments ; thus pale, decomposed, and ugly, he is exposed to the view of all, who consider him with astonishment and horror ; even the nearest and dearest friends are afraid of remaining alone with the dead man. A few hours then having elapsed, before he commences to putrefy he is sent away from the house, and carried to the church ; the sepulchre is opened ; the grave is dug, the body is laid down and covered with earth, that it may corrupt and be the food of worms, which we see each day in our cemeteries. O God ! what a strange change of scene ! This is to happen to all, rich and poor, noble and plebeians, to me who speak, to you who listen. Oh ! what a subject for meditation, how efficacious to induce us to amend and to humble our pride.

Alexander the Great, once seeing Diogenes walk round a cemetery, being astonished, asked : " What are you doing here ? " The philosopher, to humble the pride of so famous a man, replied : " I am seeking amidst these bones for the head of your father. " So true it is, that the deceased, being once thrown into the burial place and reduced to ashes, all are intermingled, without being able to distinguish the king from the vassal, or the captain from the private soldier.

Let us consider, beloved, is it true or not, all that has been here deposed ? Can you hope not to die ? Certainly not ; this would be the greatest folly. Is it true or not, what William Granbergi, Archbishop of Cambray, caused to be written in large charac-

ters in his cabinet. "A filo vita, a vita mors, a morte pendet eternitas," "Life hangs from a thread, from life death, and from death eternity." If it be so, how does it happen, that we think of everything else, besides the most important affair of man, that is, to die well? We can die but once; if not well accomplished, the error is eternal. It is usual for things not to succeed well at first, such as embroidery, dancing, and similar things. Why then not be accustomed to die to self, to the passions, before leaving this life? Imagine that an angel from heaven admonishes you that you are to die three days hence. How then would you employ the interim? In exact confessions, in the performance of fervent and supernatural acts, in pious works. Now, you have no certainty of living for three days. Why not do for yourself, what you would wish to do at the hour of death? Why not execute for yourself those pious works, which you wish your heirs to accomplish for you? Let us endeavour, by the thought of death, to amend our failings, and increase our merits, detach ourselves from all the vanities of the world, to serve God alone. The great thought of death reformed a very noble youth of Cologne, named Lifardo. Having filled the first offices in the country, he became a Cistercian monk. To humble his pride, the superior gave him the charge of a little flock, which he tended for several years with much humility: the enemy not suffering so much virtue, began to suggest, that he degraded himself too much, and that in conspicuous places he could serve God much better, and benefit his neighbour, without los-

ing his time in an employment as vile as it was useless. This temptation was so strong, that Lifardo had already resolved to return to the world, when one night being kept awake, thinking how he should quit the monastery on the following morning, suddenly a majestic person appeared before him, who darted rays of glory around him, and with a resolute voice, said : " Arise, dress yourself, and follow me." Lifardo immediately arose, and followed him : having arrived at the door of the dormitory, it opened of itself, so the person advanced towards the church, where the doors also opened : having entered and arrived in view of the cemetery, he imperiously raised one finger. O prodigy ! at this signal, all the sepulchral stones are raised in the air : the person turning to Lifardo, who trembled with fright, " Look," said he, " in this tomb lies the body of one deceased but a short time : see the skull, and in it those worms, which issue from the eyes, and enter the nostrils and the mouth : see that decayed and putrefied flesh exhaling a horrible odour, and know that the same will happen to you." Having taken the monk by the hand, he desired to conduct him to the other sepulchres, but he entreated him with tears not to afflict him any more, as he feared it would cause his death, being so terrified and astounded. The conductor, who was an angel, said : " I pardon you, but with an express agreement, that humbling all pride, you should abandon every thought of relinquishing the religious state." Having thus spoken, the angel conducted Lifardo to his cell by the same doors, which immediately closed of

themselves ; finally, departing, he said, : Remember man, thou art but dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.”—(*Cesarius, b. iv., c. iv. et alli.*)

Would to heaven, that we also had a similar thought impressed on our mind : how useful it would be, when we retire to rest at night, to extend ourselves with our hands joined on the chest, and say : “ In this position I shall be in my coffin, much sooner than I imagine.” How advantageous it would be to practise the excellent counsel of Thomas à Kempis : “ The day will come when you will not see the night ; or, the night will come when you will not see the morning.”

COLLOQUY.

My Lord Jesus Christ, in whose hands are the life and death of man, humble and contrite, I come to your feet, to implore your assistance for that great and terrible day in which I have to depart from this world. Ah ! miserable that I am : “ *Peccatem me quotidie, et non pœnitentem, timor mortis conturbat me :* ” “ The fear of death troubles me, sinning daily as I do, and not repenting.” I fear my death much, for it is a perpetual separation from what is enjoyed in this world ; but much more do I fear my irregular life, full of faults, and void of merits, which gives me no good hope for that moment on which eternity depends : “ *peccatem me quotidie, et non me pœnitentem, timor mortis conturbat me.* ” Ah ! if I continue to live as I have done, thoughtless of my soul, and as if I were never to die, it will fare badly with me in my last agony. Deign, my good

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God, to be moved to compassion towards me : as through your mercy you enlighten my mind in so lively a manner, give me also the grace to execute well what I propose. I am resolved to change my ways, and from this day forward to place this greatest of affairs before every other—to prepare myself well for death : and I will from this moment accustom myself to those Christian acts which I should make at death, when the holy crucifix will be placed in my hands. Ah ! most sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, open and bleeding for me, I now adore you a thousand times, I embrace you, and I beg of you humbly to assist me to a happy passage, and a blessed life in heaven. My God, do not abandon me in that extremity : “Cum defecerit virtus mea, ne derelinquas me :” “When my strength fails me forsake me not.”—(*Ps. lxx., 9.*) I beg it of you, through the merits of your agony and death ; I beg it of you, through those dolorous tears which your blessed mother, our most powerful advocate, shed at the foot of your cross. Amen.

MEDITATION IX.

On the death of the Just.

INTRODUCTION.

It is not true that death is always so alarming and terrible as the world considers it : on the contrary, St. Crystostom says : “It is of itself in the order of

indifferent things, which may be good or evil.”—(*Scr. 3, Ep. Phil.*)

As water of itself is neither sweet nor bitter, but may be rendered sweet or bitter according to the different liquors which are mixed with it: so death is most terrible for the wicked; most agreeable for the just; to explain which, St. Charles Borromeo caused a picture to be painted; with death in this perspective, that seen on one side, it appeared fierce and destructive, with a murderous scythe in its hand; considered on the other side, it appeared joyful and smiling, holding a golden key to open the gates of Paradise. The death of the wicked, inasmuch as it is a torment to the impious, is the daughter of sin. “*Per peccatum mors.*” “*Deus mortem non fecit.*”—(*Sap. i., 13.*) Inasmuch as it is a passage for penitents to eternal life, it is a reward given by God. The same fire in the furnace of Babylon, was a great refreshment to the three innocent children, while it burned their perfidious executioners, according to the saying of St. Chrysostom.—(*Ps. lii.*) The same thing which constitutes the punishment of the wicked, gives excessive joy to the just. Having meditated how terrible is the death of the impious, in order to avoid it, let us now consider how amiable it is to the just, in order to procure it for ourselves, as God has placed it in our hands, to have it as we please.

We shall divide this meditation into three points, in which we shall see, 1. What precedes the death of the just; 2. What accompanies it; 3. What follows it.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine we see a just man die. Oh ! what a beautiful sight ; he is without fear and anxiety, with a joyful countenance ; resigned to the Divine will ; his sighs are enkindled by the desire of soon seeing the face of God ; how bitter soever his pains may be, he is not discomposed, but gives an example of Christian patience ; conscience is without solicitude, having well arranged his spiritual affairs ; he, breathes sweet colloquies with the holy crucifix, Mary, and the saints.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Exclaim to God, with lively affection ; “ May my soul die the death of the just.” Lord, I beg it of you, through the bowels of your tender mercy.

FIRST POINT.

What precedes the death of the just.

1. Great tranquillity of soul. Though it be true, according to Aristotle, that there is nothing so terrible as death, notwithstanding, the just man fears it not ; he has every reason not to fear it, knowing his conscience to be in a good state ; he does not apprehend the risk of evil after death ; on the contrary, he has the hope of sovereign good in Heaven ; being always well disposed to die, any death, how quick soever, is not unprovided for him, but prevented with good disposition. In the perils of tempests, earthquakes, and conflagrations, sinners

grow pale and tremble ; not so the just souls, who are well disposed and possess the grace of God.

It is related of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, that diverting himself one day in a country house, he was asked by a religious, his companion : " If you were now admonished you were to die, what would you do ? " The saint answered : " I would continue to amuse myself as I am doing, for, long since, I have prepared for death as well as I possible could."

Nazianzen writes of St. Basil (*Orat. de S. Basil*), that being threatened by the tyrannical prefect, if he refused to accede to his wishes, he would punish him with privation of goods, banishment, cruel torments, and death, the saint, with generosity, worthy of himself, said : " Know that I fear none of your threats ; not the privation of goods—for I esteem myself as having nothing ; nor exile—for I well know the whole Earth is the Lord's ; nor torments—for my body is already so attenuated, that it can endure but a little longer ; finally, I do not fear death, as it will afford me the happiness of seeing God in Heaven ; it will also be of very little trouble to me, having already experienced it in part by daily mortification : " *Maxima ex parte mortem obii.*" Oh ! what great happiness—what content for the just, not only not to fear death, but to expect and desire it, like the apostle St. Paul, who said : " I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ."—(1 *Phil.* xxiii. ;) because he lived in the world as a pilgrim, such as every one is.

The pilgrim desires nothing more earnestly than to arrive at his country : so the just man sighs to

arrive at heaven, his country. Mercenaries who labour unceasingly all day at work, expect with anxiety the last hour of the week to receive the reward of their labour. The just, whose days, (*Job. vii.*,) resemble those of mercenaries, from continually labouring and suffering for God, expect the end of life to receive the reward of so many meritorious works. The apostle asserts (*Phil. i.*, 21,) that it would be a great gain for him to die. "*Mihi vivere Christus est et mori lucrum.*" By instinct, every one desires happiness and beatitude: this is the accomplishment of all desires, according to the angelical doctor, "*Beatudo desideriorum quies.*" As the just man ardently loves God, so he desires nothing in a more lively manner than to see and enjoy him: knowing he cannot attain this without death, his desire of dissolution increases, he is sometimes obliged to exclaim with St. Paul: "Who will deliver me from this body subject to death?" When shall I be free from the trouble of this body, which prevents me from seeing and enjoying God? With the same sentiment, holy David spoke: "When shall I appear before the face of God?"—(*Ps. xli.*, 3.) St. Augustine made use of the same language, (*Soliloq. c.*, 1,) reflecting on the answer given to Moses, "*non videbit me homo et vivet:*" "Man shall not see me and live:" excited by holy impatience, he exclaimed: "*Eja, Domine, moriar ut te videam; videam, ut hic moriar. Nolo vivere, volo mori; dissolvi cupio et esse cum Christo:*" "O Lord, let me die in order that I may see thee; let me see in order that I may die here; I wish not to live, I wish

to die." I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. Finally, St. Jerome, being in his last agony, with sweet words spoke of death. "*Nigra es sed forinosa. O mors dulcis, et jucunda, favus distillans labia tua:*" "Thou art black, but beautiful." Thence arises the great peace of the just, in being admonished of death. Confessors have not much labour, nor is it necessary to make use of artifice and studied expressions, to give them this notice: being well aware of the good disposition of their souls, they receive this annunciation with resignation and joy: thus, in fact, it happens, that good Christians do not contristate themselves in hearing death spoken of, but they rejoice, and thank the priest for the good news, and with entire resignation place themselves in the hands of God: it sometimes happens, that they will not have prayers for the prolongation of life, but solely, that the Divine will be accomplished. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, being admonished that he was about to die, after thanking the person who announced it, said: "I have rejoiced in what was said to me, we shall go into the house of our Lord."

A French lady, being also admonished of her approaching death, turning with a most joyful countenance to him who had told her, and taking a very rich diamond from her finger, she said: "Take this, as a reward for the most agreeable news you have given me."

The just man, at the hour of death, is not subject to solicitude or anxiety concerning temporal interests, for what regards the soul, having at leisure well provided for all; with a tranquil heart and serene

countenance he expects death: that, apparently, happens to him, which was admired in the famous Temple of Solomon: the sacred text says, that in building that great edifice, no noise was heard of hammers, axes, or other instruments for building, but all was done with the greatest quietness and silence.—(3 *Reg.* vi., 7.) How did it happen, that in erecting so extensive a structure, and with so great a number of workmen, no noise was heard? Abulenses says, that all the pieces of wood and marble which were to serve for the great structure, were first worked on the mount with such proportion and equality, that afterwards in the Temple, nothing more required to be done, but to place those pieces together, one over the other. So, in the agony of a just man, when there is question of adjusting all that concerns the great journey to eternity, there is no noise made with notaries and witnesses to a will; nor long conferences with confessors to set in order accounts of conscience. Why so? These things were already prepared on the mountain; that is, in the solitude of the spiritual exercises, which he usually made every year, or in the daily retirement of prayer: then he reflected at leisure, and established by the light of God, how he should dispose of his temporal goods: with long and frequent examinations of conscience, he disposed himself for most exact confessions, as if each should be the last of his life: thus all things being well disposed, he does not lament nor disquiet himself nor others; it appears to him he has nothing more to do, but to fly to heaven after his death.

O God ! what an easy, what a sweet manner of dying ! Ecclesiasticus had reason to say, (i., 18,) that men who feared God passed very well the extremity of their lives. “*Timenti Dominum bene erit in extremis.*” Why do you not resolve at once to do that which, at the hour of death, you will wish you had accomplished ? For a long period, perhaps, you purposed doing so, but deferred it from day to day, deceiving yourself with the hope of doing it later. At length, open your eyes ; delay no longer : perhaps this is the last night which the Lord will give you. Life is uncertain ; mortal accidents are frequent ; our years are advancing. For what are you still waiting ? “*Dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum ?*” “While we have time left us to do good.”

SECOND POINT.

What accompanies the death of the just.

Two things principally accompany the death of the just : 1. Exemption from the most grievous evils of death ; 2. An anticipation of future beatitude.

1. The just man does not feel the torments of death. “*Non tangent illos tormentum mortis.*”--(*Sap.* iii., 1.) His dissolution may, in truth, be called the shadow, or appearance of death ; for, one of the greatest evils of death is, the hard separation which is made from all that is created, from friends, relatives, even from self : he, then, who has lived unceasingly detached from the world and from himself, actually, or in affection by means of Christian

mortification, has not at death to make such a separation from necessity, having already spontaneously made it, and for a long period. Frequently, well disposed persons, when in their agony, do not wish to hear their families spoken of, or other interests, as if they never had any: their sole wish then is, to prepare their souls for eternity.

Another great evil is, the memory of former sins. The impious Antiochus, when dying said with a sigh; "Nunc reminiscor malorum, quæ feci in Jerusalem:" "Now do I remember the evils which I did in Jerusalem." If the just man remembers his former sins, he also recollects the contrite confessions with which he cancelled them and the numerous penances with which he satisfied the pain due to them. Thus, he is rather consoled than grieved.

The snares and temptations of the devil at that time are great evils: for they are more fierce and troublesome at death. The just man does not fear them, being accustomed to overcome them; and having well practised the method of resisting the devil, he then finds facility in doing so.

God with partiality assists whoever was faithful to him during life, and defends him from infernal lions, as he defended the innocent Daniel in the lions' den.—(*Dan.* vi., 22.)

Finally, a great evil is the loss of life, which of itself is so precious and so dear to man. This loss the just man does not mind; he knows that death does not entirely deprive him of life, but changes it into a much better existence in heaven. St. Bernard exclaims; "O bona mors, quæ vitam non aufert, sed

transfert in melius." If we well consider the person who dies holily in the grace of God, he is totally exempted from the more grievous evils of death ; for he can truly say with holy David : " If I should walk in the shadow of death, I would not fear, for thou art with me."—(*Ps. xxii.*, 1.)

Is not this a great advantage for the just not to have any evil at death, which is considered the greatest of all evils. He who has lived well, enjoys at death unspeakable delight, so as to be able to say : " Ah ! Lord, in despoiling me of this mortal body you invest me with the liveliest joy." Solomon praising the valiant woman in the Proverbs, says : " She shall laugh in the latter day."—(*Prov. xxxi.*, 23.) This happens to all just souls, for several reasons. We read in the lives of the holy fathers that this happened to a monk of Scizia. This holy man was dying as he had lived, a saint ; while many monks surrounded his bed, bitterly lamenting the loss they were going to sustain of their dear friend and beloved master, he suddenly began to laugh. What is still more strange, looking around him, and, seeing them continuing to weep, he laughed louder a second and third time. The servants of God being astonished, said : " What signifies this laugh ? Is this a time for laughing ? we weep so much for you, and you laugh. What does this mean ?" The saint with a most joyful countenance, said : " Know that I laugh for three reasons. 1. I laugh at you for having so great a fear of death. 2. I laugh for you, knowing some among you are so negligent as not to have prepared for death. 3. I laugh for

myself ; after the labours of this miserable world, finally I go to eternal repose." For these motives and for others, every just man rejoices at the end of his life.

St. Bernard, discoursing on these motives, reduces them principally to three. 1. He who dies well enjoys departing from this world, wherein sin is so easily committed. He appears to say within himself : " Blessed be God that I am departing for another world, in which I can never displease that God I so much love, and who so well deserves to be loved." 2. He enjoys departing from this valley of tears, in which there are so many misfortunes, so many perils for soul and body : he consoles himself, saying : " May God be blessed, I shall no longer see so many vanities, scandals, and imperfections as there are now amongst men. Blessed be God, that I have no longer to endure so many risks of failure, shipwrecks, plagues, earthquakes, conflagrations." Finally, he rejoices because he knows he is to pass from labour to reward ; from exile to his home ; from prison to the liberty of the children of God ; from tempests to the port ; from combat to the crown. He appears to say joyfully within himself : " Oh ! how happy I now am to have mortified my body and suffered for God ! Blessed fasts, blessed austerities, blessed alms, blessed steps I took to the church and to oratories. Pains and sorrows have passed, I now find a good provision of merits for the other world. If I had spent my life in delights, all should have now passed without fruit for me, and I should not now feel so great happiness. May God be a thousand times blessed, who gave me light

and grace to be able to accomplish what I have done." Amidst these internal enjoyments the happy dying man is not only without anxiety and fear, but with a joyful countenance, with sparkling eyes, and a soul resigned to God : he will not speak nor hear of any subject but of God and Paradise. As he had always been humble, pious, and patient, he shows still more clearly at that last moment examples of all virtues.

The soldiers of Gideon combating against the Madianites carried lighted torches hidden under earthen vessels ; breaking these in view of the enemy the light shone forth suddenly upon them, and struck them with unheard of terror, and humbled their pride.—(*Jud.* vii., 20.) So, at the dissolution of the bodies of the just, they will appear luminous examples of every virtue, wonderfully edifying the spectators, and causing great confusion to the demons. How painful soever his distemper and bitter his medicines, the just man offers all to God, and blesses him for thus effacing his Purgatory in part. He is not angry with any person, but always composed, and grateful for any assistance. Being in the habit of invoking with tenderest devotion, Jesus, Mary, and the saints, oh ! with what confidence he does so at death ! Frequently turning towards his advocate St. Joseph, he begs his special assistance, particularly after receiving from the hands of his confessor the holy crucifix. O God, with what fervour of spirit he considers and embraces it, protesting that all his love and hope repose in those precious wounds. He also seems to express : The greatest comfort I

have at this time is derived from the mystical rod Mary, and from the adorable wood of the holy cross. If any temptation of diffidence should occur, he experiences that the same crucifix is for him an impregnable buckler which heals his heart. Is not this inexpressible happiness for the just man, which appears a foretaste of his approaching eternal beatitude?

Who will not weep with tenderness, hearing what happened to St. Gertrude in her last agony? With the holy crucifix in her hands, shedding most sweet tears, she opened her heart to her Redeemer; collecting on her dying lips the little strength that remained to her, she spoke to Jesus with the warmest affection, insomuch that our Lord would from that moment reward her. Detaching his nailed hands from the cross, with them he opened his side, and approached it to the lips of Gertrude, that she might expire within it, as she happily gave up her last sigh to God. Was not this an anticipated Paradise for that holy soul?

We read of several saints having died laden with these extraordinary favours. St. Paul, the first hermit, died on his knees, with his hands joined on his breast, his eyes turned towards Heaven, whilst praising God. St. John of God being in his agony, descended from his bed, and on his knees revered the cross, and amidst devout embraces surrendered his soul in the side of Jesus: being dead, he remained on his knees in the act of embracing the cross.

The venerable Abbot Robert, at the death of one of his Cistercian monks, who was much given to prayer, saw angels descend from Heaven, who from

a precious little basket strewed lilies and roses on the dying person, then took his soul in their hands to carry it to Heaven.—(*M. Spec. dist. iii., ex. 22.*)

The invincible Cardinal Roffense, who was condemned by Henry VIII. to be beheaded, for not signing his name to a divorce from his queen consort, left prison worn out, emaciated, scarcely able to take a step with the gout, which obliged him to use a stick to walk. At the view of the block on which he was to be beheaded, he was so filled with transports of joy, that he threw away his stick, saying: "Come, feet, take these last steps, by which the body goes to a glorious death, and the soul to Paradise."

St. Francis of Paul, knowing by revelation the hour of his translation extended himself on a cross, and caused the history of the passion to be read aloud; then embracing tenderly and pressing the crucifix to his heart, repeating several times: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," he expired on Good Friday, precisely at three o'clock, not only without signs of pain, but showing extreme joy. "In osculo Domini."

Is it not well to die the death of the just? Is it not a noble commencement of those enjoyments which are to be theirs in Paradise? If there were no other reward for a good life, but such a death, would it not be a great recompense? It now depends on us to have it if we wish: death answers, like the echo, and corresponds to our life.—(*2. Cor. xix.*) Shall we be so inconsiderate; being able, with a little labour, to attain a most happy death, yet neglect it? St.

Paul says : " If we sow during life the thorns of sin, we cannot at death reap great merit."—(*Gal.* vi., 8.)

THIRD POINT.

What follows the death of the just.

Two things happen to the just after their death, each of them most happy and glorious : one concerns the body amongst men ; the other, the soul amongst the blessed. God often so disposes of the body, that it emits a sweet odour, or does not contract the stiffness of death, or at least has a serene and beautiful countenance, as if asleep : far from infusing fear, it gives pleasure to those who surround it. Some devoutly kiss the hands and feet ; all wish, through devotion, to have something belonging to the deceased, and implore his intercession with God. Others continually repeat : " He is blessed." Each relates some particular virtue most conspicuous in him. Some praise his patience, his devotion, his charity to the poor. With all, his memory remains in benediction. Finally, the wisest certify that his death should not be lamented, but emulated : to this his dearest relatives and most intimate friends agree : of which we have a clear testimony in holy David. Two of his sons died, one an innocent child, the other an impious rebel, namely, Absalom. For the death of the innocent he did not shed a tear, after having shown great signs of grief for his sickness, (2 *Reg.* xii., 13 :) he no sooner died, than he adorned himself and refreshed himself with food. On the contrary, for the death of his wicked son Absalom, he

did nothing but sigh and sob, saying : " Absalom, my son Absalom."

How strange ! David weeps so much for the death of a wicked wretch, who caused the crown on his head to totter ; and he does not weep for the death of an innocent son, who might have become the support of his old age and of his kingdom.

What does this mean ? St. Ambrose says : " Be not astonished : David had reason : he weeps for the death of the impious Absalom ; for, from temporal death, he passes to that which is eternal. He does not lament the death of the innocent, because it is for him the beginning of a blessed immortality. Whatever follows the death of the just as to the body, is glorious and precious ; much more glorious is that which follows the soul in heaven."

St. Henry, the worthy spouse of St. Cunegunda, once praying at the sepulchre of St. Wolfgang, saw in a vision a hand which wrote on the wall these words : " Post sex : " " After six." He said within himself : " This is a clear admonition which God gives me, that in six days I shall die." Consequently he began with great fervour to prepare for death. But after six days he had better health than ever. He then said : My death will happen after six weeks ;" during this interval he prayed, and did continual penance ; at the termination of this period he was exempted from the shadow of sickness. He then said : " I cannot but think it signifies after six years." During all this time he practised so many virtues, that he acquired the name of a saint. At the end of six years he was elected emperor. The

preparation for death during six years served to acquire for him the imperial crown.

A thousand times happy is the just man, who not only for six years, but during his entire life, unceasingly disposes himself for death; this lengthened preparation will serve to acquire for him an eternal crown. Happy he, who after leading a short life in the world, amidst the flames of divine love, by death arises, like a phoenix, to an immortal life among the blessed. Holy Job therefore consoled himself: "*In nidulo meo moriar et quasi phoenix multiplicabo dies meos:*" "In my nest shall I die, and, like the phoenix, multiply my days."—(xxix., 8.) He does not enter the sepulchre, despoiled like the rest of mankind, but loaded with virtues, with the merit of the riches he dispensed to the poor for the love of Jesus Christ. "*Ingredieris in abundantia sepulcrum.*"—(*Job* v., 26.) The just man's body going to the grave, his soul goes to be crowned in heaven.

With this motive St. Cyprian encouraged the martyrs to die willingly for Christ. Oh! what jubilee, what inexpressible joy shall the soul that is saved experience, seeing itself suddenly in the enjoyment of eternal felicity amongst the blessed! It will say with St. Peter of Alcantara, who appeared to St. Teresa: "O happy penance! which merited for me so much glory." Happy fasts, alms, that acquired for me so beautiful a Paradise, I bless you a thousand times.

Let us now enter into ourselves, and thus discourse: If the death of the just be so sweet, as we have already meditated—so much so, that Father

Francis Suarez, a celebrated doctor of the Society of Jesus, pronounced these words on his death-bed : "I did not think it was so sweet to die,"—who would not desire this beautiful death? who would not repeat : "May my soul die the death of the just?"—(*Num. xxiii., 30.*)

These words, however, were pronounced by the impious Balaam, who so much desired to die well, while he lived badly, and had no intention of amendment. What folly! Am I less foolish, knowing clearly how precious the death of the just is, I desire and sigh after it, yet I walk in the opposite paths of iniquity. How can I expect to have peace at death, if I now spend months and years for the interests of the body, without being able to spend one day for the settling of the affairs of the soul by an exact general confession? How can I pretend to have special assistance from God, Mary, and the saints, in that last moment, if I do not now think of gaining their patronage by devout homage? With what provision of merits can I go to the other world, if I am now negligent of performing good works? If I wish not to fear, but to rejoice at death, I must deeply impress on my mind the great sentiment of St. Ambrose : "Non habemus in morte, quod timeamus, si nihil quod timendum sit, vita commisit:" "We have not in death what to fear, if we have committed nothing to be feared." St. Augustine says the same. (*Ser. 27, de Verb, Dom.*) If you live well, you will not die badly.

Death should be moderately feared ; as much as is necessary to regulate our lives well, says St. Am-

brose. We should sovereignly dread, not temporal, but eternal death. We should not act like Cain, who, as St. Ambrose reflects (*Cain and Abel*, II. ix.), having committed fratricide, solely feared temporal death, but did not fear dying miserably for eternity; consequently, he did not think of doing penance for his sin.

A person who lives in a Christian manner, and who believes and hopes in eternal beatitude, should not have that great fear of death, like infidels, who do not believe in Paradise.—(1 *Thess.* iv., 12.) The separation of the soul from the body is but a shadow, an appearance of death.—(*Ps.* xliii., 20.) The division of the soul from God—this is the true death.

It is natural for children to fear shadows; but it would be pusillanimous in a Christian to fear too greatly temporal death: besides, it shows but little love of God, to have too great a fear of death, by means of which we go to God, and little gratitude to God, who often takes persons early out of the world, to unite them to himself.—(*Sap.* iv., 17).

I should then purpose to be ever resigned to the divine will; and when it shall please the Lord to call me to himself, to accept with courage and thanksgiving the admonition of death. If this appear hard, reflect that Jesus Christ purposely wished to suffer agony and death, to take off the bitterness.

Should it appear to me difficult to do for God what God has done for me? When the Redeemer commanded St. Peter to come to him on the waters, he gave him assistance to walk on the waves as if on dry land. So the same Lord who commands us

to approach him by the sea of agony and death, will give us grace to overcome all the tempests which accompany death. St. Augustine (in *Ps.* xxxix.) says: "Non sinet ille perire qui te jussit ambulare." "He who has ordered you to walk will not let you perish."

COLLOQUY.

My good God, in whose hands are the life and death of man, I adore you, prostrate on the earth; and whilst in your presence, I reflect on the happy death of your faithful servants, I am forced to exclaim with a holy envy: "Ah! happy they are—a hundred thousand times happy, (*Apoc.* xiv., 13.) Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Oh! how much do I desire to share their happy fate.

I well know that I do not possess their merit, for which I feel inexpressible regret. Ah! my God, if for the past I have not lived justly, but as a wicked sinner, know, that in future it shall be no longer so. I detest at your feet all the evil I have done, and I resolve to commence a new life: "Ego dixi: nunc cœpi." Deign to assist me, I beg of you, with your grace, so that you may reform and sanctify my manners in such a way, that I may enjoy at death an anticipation of the beatitude which your servants experience; that "aliquo beatitudinis rore refrigerantur," according to St. Cyprian. Deign to console me in that great moment, and grant me benignantly that last final grace which I cannot merit, but can obtain from you; therefore, humbled at your feet, with tearful eyes, with most

humble prayers, I implore your infinite clemency. Ah! give me, Lord, this final grace, not through my merits, for I do not possess them, but through the bowels of your infinite mercy, and grant it to me through the intercession of your most holy and dolorous mother, and through the assistance she gave at your agony and death. Amen.

MEDITATION X.

On the particular judgment.

INTRODUCTION.

Seneca wrote, in his *Questions on Nature*, that every kind of venomous animal—toads, vipers, even dragons—if struck by a thunderbolt, lose their poison, and their wound becomes innocuous. If, then, we desire that a sinner should lay aside the venom of his vices and perverse customs, he must be wounded as it were by a thunderbolt of the holy fear of God, especially by the thought of that terrible and irrevocable sentence which he is to receive at the tribunal of God. The judgment which is passed upon the wicked in human judicature, is called in law, the most terrible employment of human power. Oh! how much more tremendous the judgment of sinners by the majesty of an offended God.

When the Chaldean soldiers dragged the unfortunate Sedecias to the tribunal of Nebuchadnezzar, (*in Reblata*, 4 Reg. 25,) he judged him in this manner. First, with a severe and stern countenance

he reproached him with his felony ; he then caused all his children to be murdered before him ; then he had his eyes removed by main force ; finally, loading him with chains from head to foot, he condemned him to perpetual imprisonment in Babylon. What a terrible judgment ! How severe a condemnation ! More terrible, without comparison, is that which is pronounced at the tribunal of God, upon the soul, the instant it leaves the body : much more minutely will the process of sins be examined. The sentence will not decree temporal pains, but eternal torments. Let us then meditate in earnest, and act so that the particular judgment after death may assist us to live well, and dispose us not to fear at that terrible tribunal. Thus acted holy David when he said : “ *Judicia tua adjuvabunt me :* ” “ *Thy judgments shall help me.* ”—(*Ps. cxviii.*) Thus should we also act.

We should divide the meditation into three points, and consider : 1. The soul appearing at the particular judgment. 2. The examination. 3. The sentence.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see in the other world a most obscure place : in it a large black bench, on which is raised a tribunal : there behold Christ seated, his eyes dazzling, in his mouth a sword : his right hand wields a group of thunderbolts, and in his left is a balance of most tremendous justice. Before him is placed a poor guilty soul, between her angel-guardian and a demon. The latter accuses with great violence, and

the angel-guardian tries to defend, while the soul is seized with panic.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Humbled before God, and with a contrite heart, say: "When thou shalt come to judge, condemn me not." Lord, remember thou hast created me to save me; thou hast shed the last drop of thy blood to save me. Condemn me not on that terrible day

FIRST POINT.

The soul appearing at the particular judgment.

No sooner shall the soul leave the body, than instantly it is cited before the tribunal of God, to be severely judged; for every consideration this judgment will be most terrible.

1. For the time; all is to be completed in one moment. At tribunals on earth, wretched culprits have time to breathe; until the fact be proved, witnesses examined, reasons debated, the case summed up, there is cause to hope and fear in turn. At the judgment of God time is not wanting to decide the question, the same judge having been witness of all crimes. "Ego judex et testis:" "I am the judge and the witness." Nor to decide on the punishment, nor to form a just decree. God being infinite wisdom, immediately knows what is to be decreed by justice; so that judgment is accomplished in one minute; if the sentence be unfavourable, it will be like a thunderbolt, which will suddenly astound the miserable sinner.

2. It will be terrible, as to the locality ; for in the place where the person dies, a tribunal is there erected, and the soul is judged in view of the corpse, which is deformed and ugly. O God ! what sentiments of anger will the soul conceive against that body, which it will curse : it will think : “ Ah ! to please thee, I find myself in these fears and perils ; how much better it would have been for me, had I mortified thee as thou deservedst, for the love of Jesus Christ. For this putrid carcass, which is to decay in a grave, I am almost on the point of being condemned to eternal torments.’

3. It will be terrible for the company. The soul will find itself alone at the tribunal of God, without friends, relatives, or intercessors. David, (in *Ps.* xxi.) calls his soul his only one, because it is to appear alone before the tribunal of God, with the angel-guardian on the right hand, and on the left the demon. The devil that befriended the sinner whilst alive, now accuses him in a hostile manner : exaggerating his wickedness, he cries out before God, and calls for his condemnation. St. Basil says : “ Idem et in peccato coöperator est et accusator.” “ He the same, both an accomplice in the sin and an accuser.” He will say : “ Lord, he has been a dissolute, interested, scandalous person ; he has a thousand times transgressed every precept of the Decalogue and of the Church, he then should go to hell.” The holy angel-guardian will answer : “ Silence, infernal beast ; if he did evil, he also did good ; so many communions, so many mental and vocal prayers, so many times he assisted at the church.”

"Oh! what good was this?" the devil will say, triumphantly, "confessions without contrition or amendment; communions without preparation or fervour; mental prayer one continual distraction; vocal prayers recited negligently and half asleep. In the church what irreverence, talking, immodesty? Is not this evil rather than good? But let it be so, and pass for good. Ah! how little it was, and incomparably less than the evil. Let it be seen in the scales: in one balance let his innumerable sins be placed. Oh! how this will outweigh the other." At this sight, the unhappy soul, knowing itself to be guilty and convicted, trembles: the angel-guardian appears to consider it with an angry and melancholy countenance. Above all, at this judgment, the presence of Christ, seated on his tribunal, will be terrible. It will be an insupportable torment for the soul to consider the countenance of Christ. 1. Because he appears as a great and angry judge. 2. As a great benefactor betrayed.

As an angry judge he will show himself with a severe and fiery countenance. Merely to be seen by that soul is a great reproof for its ingratitude. What horror for a son to appear before his father after having plotted his death? or, for a wife to come before her husband after having dishonoured the nuptial bed? or, for a favourite to be conducted into the presence of his monarch after having conspired against him?

Peter Tultuman relates (*b. IV., c. ii., s. 10*), and Lobezius (in the *Way of Life and Death, b. I., c. iii., s. 6*), that a king of Asia, named Elenehan, being

greatly inclined to mercy, having gone once to hunt, found by chance a little leprous child left to be devoured by the wild beasts: he takes her by the hand, conducts her to the palace, and having heard from the physicians, that to cure her, a bath of human blood was necessary, he caused a vein to be opened in the arm of his eldest son; but the loss of blood was too much for the strength of the eldest son, and he died; she, however, was perfectly cured. Becoming afterwards extraordinarily beautiful, she was adopted by the king as his daughter, made heiress of the kingdom, and espoused to a prince of the royal blood. What greater kindness can be imagined? She, however, proved ungrateful and perfidious: after having betrayed the fidelity she owed her consort, she took refuge with another king, an enemy, and waged war against the king who was her benefactor. Providence so disposed of matters, that she was overcome in battle, and brought prisoner to court, where the council assembled to decide on the kind of death she should undergo: some decreed fire, others the axe, or the sword. The oldest of the counsellors said: "Let her solely present herself at the feet of the king, his majesty being enthroned, let her be constrained to have her eyes fixed on the king's countenance." His majesty was pleased with this sentence, and that rebellious creature having come before him, she scarcely raised her eyes to look at him, than struck with terror, she grew pale, trembled, fell on the ground, and died.

The soul presented before the tribunal of God,

was also infected with the leprosy of original sin, and doomed to eternal death : she also was revived by the King of kings, with a bath of Divine blood shed on the cross : she was likewise adopted for daughter, by sanctifying grace, and made heiress of Paradise : she too rebelled against God, waged war against him by her sins ; and now at the particular judgment, she is obliged to fix her eyes on the countenance of her great benefactor, who is now become her judge. What terrors then will be hers ? “ Et aspicient me, quem confixerunt,” says *Zachary*, xii.

From all these motives, we may conclude how wretched will be the appearance of a soul at the tribunal of God, even before the beginning and termination of the judgment. St. Augustine says, apparently weeping, (*Tract lviii.*) : “ Ah ! miserable sinner, what wilt thou do at that time ; for whosoever thou shalt cast thine eyes, thou shalt see objects of terror. On high, God stands as an irritated judge ; beneath, the chaos of hell, which awaits thee ; on the right, innumerable sins ; on the left, countless demons ; and within thee, conscience, which torments and condemns thee. What wilt thou do ? ” Reflect that at this tribunal, and in this terror, you will certainly be : this is of faith.— (*2 Cor. v., 10.*) You will there find yourself much sooner than you imagine. That can be said of the particular judgment which Jesus Christ said of the general one, (in *Luke xvii.*,) namely, that it would come like the universal deluge : that is, suddenly, and when men thought of nothing but of banquets and espousals. As death usually comes when least ex-

pected, and when men amuse themselves; so, immediately after death, follows the particular judgment. Knowing all this, you do not think of it, no more than if it were not to happen, or that you did not believe it. You live without resolving to settle the affairs of your conscience. O blindness! O lamentable negligence!

SECOND POINT.

Examen at the particular judgment.

James of Paradise, a Carthusian, writes in his book on mortal sin, that a religious of his order appeared after death to a companion and great friend while at prayer, and showed himself under a melancholy countenance, and invested with deep mourning. The religious asking him why he was so downcast and melancholy, he, heaving a deep sigh, answered: "Nemo credit:" No one believes it. The astonished religious again interrogated him: "What can that be that no one believes?" The deceased answered: "Quam districte Deus judicet et severe puniat." He then disappeared, leaving the religious half dead with fright. No one can believe and no one can imagine "how rigorously God judges and punishes" the sins of men. It cannot be otherwise; for if a man who has but slight knowledge of evil, judges others so severely, and appears to find a defect in everything, how much more rigorously will God judge, who is infinite in wisdom, and has perfect knowledge? If in the angels even, who are most pure and holy spirits, he finds what

to amend, "*In angelis suis reperit pravitatem*," how many shortcomings will he see in man, who is so imperfect and vile a creature?

It is written of St. Matilda, that once in a vision she was conducted to heaven to be judged by the angels. They reprehended her for so many failings that she almost died with terror. What then shall become of a man not holy, but wicked, when he shall be judged by God, who has so much more knowledge than the angels?

What fear and dismay for an ignorant person, should he be minutely examined by a great theologian, or a great legislator? What confusion for an ignorant soul to be examined by a God of infinite wisdom, who knows and can convince of even the slightest fault? O God, how terrible is this judgment!

The devil having strongly accused that soul, and the angel guardian having tried by all possible means to defend it, Christ as judge will commence speaking: "*Redde rationem*." "Come render an account of so many years of life so ill spent. Give an account of every thought, word, and action." Come to be examined; and this examination, said David, is made by the very eyes of God: "*Palpebræ ejus interrogant filios hominum*"—(*Ps. x., 14.*) Why the eyes? God who sees all, even to the bottom of the heart, has no need either of tongue or speech. He not only sees all failings, but makes the soul see them most clearly, as in a looking-glass.—(*Ps. lxxxvi., 8.*) God will say "Consider how many sins you committed in childhood; how diso-

bedent to your parents ; in youth, how many lies and frailties—how scandalous and unconstrained in speech ; in manhood, how irregular in conduct—how many frauds and injustices ; even in old age you did not think of doing penance for your sins ; on the contrary, you were then more avaricious, passionate, and vindictive. “*Redde rationem.*” Of the precepts of the Decalogue and of the Church, there is not one but which was transgressed several times. Render an account of your employments, exercised with so much negligence and infidelity ; of your children and family, of which you have so little care ; of the good you omitted ; of the good so ill done. Render an account of the sins which others committed by your bad example, or evil counsels, or little vigilance. Render an account of so many graces, so many benefits which you have abused. What could I do more, not only for your salvation, but for your sanctification ? “*Quid potui ultra facere vineæ meæ, et non feci ?*” “What more could I have done for my vineyard and did not do ?” I provided you with so many sacraments, priests, sermons, holy books ; so many means of increasing merits. Ungrateful soul, you have abused all, and rendered them useless. Ah ! miserable sinner ! At this most just research of Christ he will remain confused ! Oh ! how well will he then know what he never wished to comprehend during life. Then, indeed, will he understand both the grievousness and multitude of his sins. As a beam thrown into the sea cannot be entirely seen, being half immersed in water, it appears so light that any child is able to

move it with the hand; but when drawn to the shore it entirely discovers itself, and cannot be moved even by a strong man. Thus sin is not entirely known to the world as to its malice; so it is committed by all with great facility. Oh! when seen on the shore of eternity, then indeed all its malice is known—its weight and its grievousness.

The multitude of sins will also be then known. As in the rays of the sun innumerable atoms are discovered floating in the air, which were not observed in the shade; so in the light of the countenance of Christ as judge, man will discover the innumerable sins he has committed, which he had never thought of, or had counted as trifles. Oh! what dismay for a sinner, to discover a countless array of transgressions he had not observed.

An apothecary being one night asleep in his room, where he kept enclosed, in a vase of porphyry, a great number of vipers for medicinal purposes, these reptiles, grouping together, about midnight, forced open the wooden cover that enclosed them, and escaped to all parts of the chamber, jumping on the bed of the terrified apothecary. O what horror! He sees himself surrounded by a numerous collection of poisonous vipers, that were creeping on him to bite and kill him. The unfortunate man knew not how to flee or defend himself, since at every step, and in every place, he encountered death. While he defended himself from some, he was assailed by many others.

Oh! how much greater will be the terror of a soul at the tribunal of God, seeing himself surrounded by

a multitude of sins; the wretched man will not know how to defend himself. For example—while he will seek to excuse the time he spent at play, his irregularities will reproach him; and palliating these, scandals, interests, hatreds, and sacrileges will reprove him. What terror—what dismay will seize him? The most terrible thing will be to hear from God the demand which God himself made to Eve, after having committed sin: “Quare hoc fecisti?” Tell me, why so many evil deeds? What induced you to offend so grievously your God, Father, Redeemer, who even died for you on a cross? “Quare hoc fecisti?” Why did you turn away from me, to follow the world, which is so great a traitor, even to follow the devil, that is your sworn enemy? What answer shall the sinner give in his defence? “Quid faciam, cum surrexerit ad judicandum Deus:” “What shall I do when God will rise to judge me?”—(*Job iii.*) He will say: “Lord, it is but too true, I have sinned, but I did not know your law.” “What,” God will reply, “after so many masters have exhausted themselves teaching you—so many confessors and preachers: you were so wise for every other affair; you were ignorant only of the manner of serving me.” “Lord, I knew it; but, to speak clearly, I could not live well in so sad a world and with so many irregular passions.” “You would be in the right,” God will say, “were you to observe my law by the sole strength of nature; but how could you not do so with the assistance of my grace, which I was ever ready to bestow on you? Why could you not do what so many others have

accomplished, who were more noble, younger, more delicate, than you, and in the same places and occasions as those in which you failed? Could you not even live like a good Christian, where so many others have become saints?" "Lord, all this is true; but the evil is already done. I can do nothing now but repent and implore your mercy." "My mercy! this is the time solely for justice. 'Non miserebor:' 'I will not have pity.' To obtain my mercy by penance, you should have thought of it sooner, when you were excited to it by divine inspirations and interior remorse of conscience. 'Tempus non erit amplius:' 'Time shall be no more.'" At these words the sinner, full of the greatest confusion, is obliged to confess: "I am in the wrong. 'Omnis iniquitas oppilabit os suum:' 'All iniquity shall stop its mouth.'" In this judgment, says St. Bernard, "Non poteris negare, non excusare veniam, non habere refugium."—(*Ser. 54, in Cant.*)

To the remonstrances of Christ shall be added those of the angels, and of all those who shall be present at that tribunal.

There was a rich and noble youth who, knowing the vanity of the world, resolved to retire to a monastery and attend solely to the salvation of his soul. His parents and friends tried to dissuade him; but he firmly answered: "I will save my soul." His widowed mother tried by every means and artifice to dissuade him: he continued to say: "Volo salvare animam meam." Finally, with great generosity he became a religious in a hermitage, where he lived with great fervour for many months. After-

wards by degrees he grew tepid; and his mother having died, he began to think of the inheritance he might have enjoyed in the world, and to waver in his vocation. At this period, he one night thought he was before the throne of God, where many devils accused him, and his afflicted angel-guardian could not find means to defend him. His mother then appearing before him, with much ridicule reproached him: "Where are those words you used to repeat—'I wish to save my soul?' How can you wish to arrive at Paradise, if you walk by rapid strides on the road to hell?" At this bitter reprehension, even though asleep, he fainted, and he awoke more dead than alive. He began to say within himself: "If the judgment of which I have dreamt struck me with so much terror, what will the reality be? If I cannot bear the severe countenance of my mother, how shall I endure that of an irritated God?" He then resumed his first fervour; and at the hour of his death his mother again appeared before him, saying: "Now indeed, son, you have truly saved your soul."

In the same manner, the holy angel-guardian, no longer as advocate, but as minister of God, will confirm the words of God, saying: "Unfortunate person, after so many inspirations, you promised God and your confessor to change your life and become a saint. Ah! these were all false promises and untruths. You changed your life, becoming more wicked, or, if you formed the resolution to despoil yourself of one vice, you adopted another more

scandalous. Begone ; you are unworthy of pardon or of pity."

Dearly beloved, seriously reflect on this point. Is not the judgment of God most minute and severe? Who can deny it? Why, then, do you not think of settling the affairs of your soul? You labour so much for temporal interests, in making up accounts, and you do not spend a thought on spiritual interests. What blindness! At length open your eyes; if you wish for a happy passage, examine and judge yourself. "If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged"—(1 Cor. i.) says the apostle. St. Bernard gives the reason (*Ser. Sup. Ps. qui habit*): God will not judge twice: thus the good thief, because he judged and condemned himself, (*Luc. xxiii., 41.*) was immediately absolved by Divine mercy. Calculate, now, the grievousness and the number of your sins, and calculate also the quality and number of your good works: if it appear to you they are not in similar proportion, resolve to lead a more penitent and holy life, and say, from your heart, to God: Ah! Lord, as you give me light to know this most important truth, give me also grace to practise it well.

THIRD POINT.

Sentence of the particular judgment.

This sentence will be most terrible, for many reasons.

1. Because a sovereign interest is concerned. If in human tribunals the sentence in a lawsuit for many thousands is expected, or in a criminal case,

when the offence is capital, O God ! what fear, what beating of the heart, what anxiety in him who awaits it. Yet, only temporal goods are treated of, the life only of the body. What alarm then shall be felt at this judgment, in which the decision will regard eternal goods or evils, not for the body alone, but also for the soul ?

2. It is a sentence either of extreme content, or extreme torment, without medium. Human tribunals frequently award sentences, without entirely deciding in favour of one party to the total ruin of the other ; but by half measures succeed in partially consoling all who are at law. In the judgment of God, the decree is to be passed either for Paradise or for hell, without any medium. Oh ! how terrific.

St. Lewis Bertrand once preaching on this subject to a great audience, burst into tears ; no longer able to speak, he interrupted the sermon, and fled to his apartment, where his religious found him, pressing his head against the ground, exclaiming : " Unfortunate that I am ; I know not what sentence awaits me, either Paradise or hell, without medium."

3. Because the sentence cannot be repealed ; no tribunal existing superior to that of Almighty God, the award of divine justice cannot be recalled : besides, as the jurists teach, the appeal is given by right of reason, or by right of fact : neither takes place in God, whose mind is most perspicacious, and his laws most clear : he does not stand in need of witnesses, being at the same time judge and witness of our actions. " Ego iudex et testis."—(*Jer. xxix.*)

4. Finally, it is a sentence of pure justice. In this world mercy is often exercised towards the guilty. Whether on account of nobility, or prerogative, or powerful intercession, the punishment is mitigated in substance or in manner. At the judgment of God, pure justice will be executed, without any mixture of mercy, equally to all, whether noble or ignoble, great or little, without exception of persons. During life, God in chastising sinners, used the greatest clemency, punishing them much less than they merited.

What terror will pervade the soul, in receiving its last sentence? When king Balthazar, in the midst of his banquet, saw three mortal fingers writing on the wall the sentence of death, the sacred texts says: "He suddenly grew pale, trembled, was troubled in thought, his strength failed, from the great fear he was in, his knees knocked against each other."—(*Daniel* v., 6.) Those who were invited, the courtiers, the queen, the ladies, all were in confusion, and all the joy of the great banquet was changed into mourning and horror. The same night, Babylon was surprised by Cyrus: the wretched Chaldean king was cruelly murdered. If, then, a sentence of death, written in mute characters, and not pronounced by a terrific voice—expressed by a simple hand, and not by the mouth of an angry God—caused so much fear in Babylon, what will the terrific sentence be, pronounced by God, at the particular judgment, on the interminable eternity of one man?

The Divine Judge after having heard the accusations of the devil and the defence of the angel-guar-

dian, if he find that the soul from good works is worthy of mercy and reward, turning with a pleasing countenance, he will joyfully say: "Come to heaven, which I have merited for thee." At these words, the angel-guardian, full of joy, will conduct the soul to the eternal joys of Paradise. "Euge serve bone et fidelis." On the contrary, if the soul is convicted of being guilty of innumerable sins, without having performed penance, and thus merited eternal pains, alas! God then, full of fury, will say: "Begone, remove far from me, I no longer recognise you as mine:" "Nescio vos." Turning to the demons, he will say: "Take him away with you to hell, put him in exterior darkness." His angel-guardian will also be obliged to say the same. "Mittite, mittite eam in tenebras exteriores."

St. Bede (*English History*, V.) relates, that an English soldier finding himself grievously infirm, was visited by king Corrado, who exhorted him to confess, but he answered, that he would do it later, if he confessed at that time he would be considered a coward and too fearful of death. Shortly after, the illness increased; the king returned to the charge, and more earnestly begged of him to confess: the soldier with a terrific howl answered, that already he was in despair, and condemned; for, two devils had read all his sins to him from a large book; two angels then appearing before him, took out a small book of his good works. The devils exclaiming: "That soul belongs to us," the angels consented, saying: "Take it, for it is yours." St. Bede, weeping over this sad case, concludes: "Pœnitentiam

quam ad breve tempus facere supersedit, in æternum sine fructu, pœnis subditus facit :” “The penance which he put off doing for a short time, he does for ever fruitlessly in pain.” Christ, the judge, having passed sentence, which the angel-guardian approved, the wicked soul will be immediately put in chains by the devil, and dragged into the abyss.

When Joshua vanquished in battle the five Amorrite kings and they fled and hid in a cave through fear, he caused them to be dragged forth and stretched on the ground, in view of the entire army, and, to humble their pride, commanded the soldiers to tread upon their necks : “Ite, ponite pedes vestros super colla regum istorum :” “Go put your feet on the neck of those kings.” He then caused them to be suspended on gibbets.—(*Joshua* x., 24.)

The soul condemned by Divine justice, will be given up to be trodden on, and to be the sport of devils, for endless ages. Reflect that you are to receive your eternal sentence at this judgment ; you know not whether for heaven or hell. If you wish to prognosticate from your manner of life, perhaps your hope cannot be well grounded. If the Lord has declared he will condemn at judgment whoever has not given food to the hungry, or clothed the naked, what will become of you, says St. Austin, (*Ser. 31, ad Frat.*), who, perhaps, have taken the bread of the poor to maintain vanity and luxury, who have despoiled widows and orphans of their substance? St. Bruno, though so penitent and holy, trembled from head to foot, and confessed that he

was in anxiety between fear and trembling. What, then, will become of you? This thought, which made the saints tremble, does it not cause the blood to freeze in your veins? Every man trembles at grievous perils: "*Timuit omnis homo.*"—(*Ps. lxxiii.*) Will you not fear the risk of a sentence that concerns your eternity? If this were not so, says St. Augustine, you would not be a man, but a stone. Ah! my God, "*confige timore tuo carnes meas.*"

COLLOQUY.

What shall I do, my God, in your terrible judgment? What shall I do? How shall I appear in your presence after having so frequently offended you? "*Domine, quando veneris judicare terram, ubi me abscondam a vultu iræ? quia peccavi nimis in vita mea.*" "Lord when you come to judge the earth, where shall I hide myself from the look of your anger? because I have sinned too much in my life." Ah! when I reflect on the years of my past life, I do not find anything which is blameless: "*Nihil dignum in conspectu tuo egi.*" On the contrary I find innumerable sins and ingritudes. How then shall I render an account of myself? If those have a more rigorous one to give who have received greater benefits, what shall I do, and what shall I say, after having been more specially beloved by you, and favoured, than others? Ah! the sole thought of it fills me with immense shame and confusion: "*Commissa mea pavesco, et ante te erubesco.*" "I tremble for the things which I have committed, and I blush before thee." One thing

alone, however, consoles me—namely, to know that you are a father and not a judge; thus I have yet time to settle the affairs of my soul: therefore, humble and contrite I cast myself at your feet: “Ideo deprecor majestatem tuam, ut tu deleas iniquitatem meam.” “Therefore I beseech your majesty that thou thyself dost blot away my iniquities.” Efface, I beg of you, with your most precious blood, the stains of my sins; forgive, O Lord, forgive. Weigh now by the standard of your cross my failings; judge me now, and absolve me; so that, being benignantly absolved by you on high, I need not fear after death your terrible tribunal. Amen.

MEDITATION XI.

On the general judgment.

INTRODUCTION.

GOD is not content with judging man privately and in secret at the particular judgment; he will judge him on the last day publicly, and with all the deadly pomp of his tremendous justice. In presence of the whole world he will justify the dispensations of his providence, which at first were not clearly understood by mankind. He will manifest the grievousness of man's sins, even the most hidden, and the ever equitable reasons which move him to award to each a proportionate sentence either of punishment or reward. Oh! how terrible this judgment will be.

Henry the Great, fourth of the name, King of

France, having ordered some cannons of bronze, of great size, he had this terrible motto inscribed on them: "Ratio ultima regum." The last and most powerful thunderbolt of kings, which no power can resist, to which all must yield.

The ultimate proof of God's indignation, to conclude with sinners, is his final judgment: "Ratio ultima." Heretofore the Lord chastised sinners from time to time, but his chastisements not being universal, or being mitigated by some sign of mercy, were like small effects of his indignation. These chastisements were only a chalice of Divine wrath, and God inclined it slightly, sometimes at one side, and sometimes on the other: at one time on Pentapolis, by burning it; or on Samaria, desolating it by famine; and so of other cities and kingdoms. At the last judgment he will pour out on all the wicked of the earth, the full chalice of the divine fury without any sign of clemency: "Ratio ultima." This last day, then, is called by Joel (ii., 2,) God's own day of vengeance: "Dies Domini;" and by Sophonias (i., 15): "Dies iræ." It is in fine, a day in which the justice of God will show itself more terrible than hell itself. What more can be said? This is clearly seen from St. Peter, (2—ii.,) where he says, speaking of the rebellious angels, that God having condemned them to hell, he kept prepared for them, as the last and greatest pain, the horror of universal judgment. Upon which A. Lapide says: "Adhuc restant aliud in iudicium reservati." Oh! then what a great judgment! Let us meditate on it, with all the application of our mind.

We shall consider : 1. The citation of men. 2. The trial of their evil deeds. 3. The last definitive sentence of their eternity.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine we see Christ, as Judge, seated on a luminous cloud, with a fiery countenance and glaring eyes, come to pass sentence, either of life or death, on the whole world reunited in the valley of Josaphat. Let us imagine our angel-guardians cry out to us : " Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment ! " Oh ! you, who by sin are dead to grace, or you who are dead to your first piety and fervour, come and meditate seriously on the general judgment.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Let us say with all our hearts to God : " Free me, O Lord, from eternal death on that tremendous day, when thou shalt come to judge : condemn me not. "

FIRST POINT.

The citation of mankind at the final judgment.

In two ways men will be cited to the universal judgment : 1. They will be cited by the elements, and by all creation, which being put in great commotion, will give clear indications that the last day is approaching, God saying by the prophet : " Dabo prodigia in cœlo et in terra, antequam veniat dies Domini magnus "—(*Joel* ii., 50.) Afterwards, they will be cited expressly and at the sound of

trumpet by the angels. All those signs predicted by the prophets in the ancient Testament will be verified, and what our Redeemer signified with his own lips. Cities and kingdoms will revolt, and be in tumult by rebellious and sanguinary wars; seasons will change, and all the good order observed until then in the planets and elements: the sun will be eclipsed; the moon will be streaked with blood; the Heavens will be replete with comets and mournful phenomena; fiery vapours will descend on the earth like falling stars; terrific plagues will desolate kingdoms; prolonged famines will cause countries to become deserts; the sea rising from its boundaries, will swallow up entire provinces; while unfortunate men, astounded and appalled with great fear, will not know whither to fly to save their lives, as the prophet Amos says (v., 19), like one who fleeing from a lion, will meet with a bear, and to flee both, taking shelter within, is bitten by an asp. Thus miserable men, to fly from the inundations of the sea, will hasten to cities; chased thence by plagues and wars, they will run to the open country; being there persecuted by wild beasts from the forests and thunder from Heaven, they will hide in the caves of mountains. Here again, they will be assailed by horrible earthquakes, which, dividing huge stones, will open before them a profound chaos. Oh! what terror! What confusion! What mourning! Above all, that immense fire will be horrible, which, arising from the four parts of the world, and dilating itself extensively, in a very short time will burn without exception everything—kingdoms, pro-

vinces, cities, villages, men, beasts, birds, cattle, plants—the most ancient archieives, obelisks, pyramids, which were thought should last for ever—all that was magnificent, rich, or great in the world, will become ashes. “*Terra et quæ in ipsa sunt opera exurentur*”—(2 *Pet.* iii., 10. All this shall happen, because God wishes to act with sinners, like those infected with plague, whose house, apparel, and whatever was contaminated, by their pestiferous breath, shall be burned.

As a great captain, who having defeated the enemy, sets fire to the tents, where the troops lay encamped; so, as all the creatures of the world, heaven, earth, the elements, shall have served man either for shelter or for incentives to sins, and as the entire world shall have been contaminated by man's wickedness, God would therefore purge the same world by fire: before punishing sinners, he would punish other creatures, as guilty of having concurred and served as instruments to all the sins of the world: who can depict the horror of seeing a world entirely consumed by flames, and innumerable victims burned alive without the possibility of escape.

After this conflagration, nothing being found in the world but ashes, the voice of man being no longer heard, nor the song of birds, time being at an end and eternity commencing, all mankind who have died since the beginning of time, will be more expressly cited to appear at the general judgment, to take place in the valley of Josaphat. The angels flying in the air, and blowing their deadly trumpets

will exclaim: "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment!" At this astounding citation, all the dead will obey: then will be seen arise from the earth, and sea innumerable bodies and dislocated bones, which reuniting, will form the figure of their ancient persons: then the souls coming, the bodies will revive, oh! with what diversity! The just, those who are saved, joyful and serene, will take up their members, saying to each of them: "Come, my body, let us reunite: it is but just, you who have been my companion in suffering, should also be my companion in enjoyment." On the contrary, the wicked, the damned, oh! with what anger and suffering they will assume their ugly, horrible, and putrid bodies. If the soul of a man who had been four days previously dead, should be replaced in his body, just as it remained in the grave, decayed, black, and full of vermin, O God! when he opens his eyes and sees himself thus disgusting and horrible, what must he suffer! What torment then it will be to a damned soul to be reunited to its putrid body. "Ah! cursed body! will it say, "for the love of you, I find myself in so many torments: come also and suffer the same pains."

Thus resuscitated, all men will assemble from every quarter of the earth, in the great valley of Josaphat: they will go in crowds, without any distinction of kings, of ploughmen, nobles or plebeians, rich or poor: scarcely arrived at the place destined for judgment, when the angels of Heaven will appear before them, to separate and collect, in different places, the just and the wicked. Ah! what a sad

separation : those who are saved, the saints, will be placed at the right, in the most honourable places ; the reprobate, the damned, will be chased to the left ; there the self-seekers, robbers, swearers, and the sacrilegious will be placed. Oh ! what a torment, and how opprobrious for those to whom the angel will say : " Go hence, go with the wicked your companions ! " What great confusion when the angel will say to the prince, to the nobleman, to the advocate : " Go there, among robbers ! " They answering : " What ! I with robbers ? " " Yes," will the angel say, " why did you oppress your vassels, rob the poor of their due, and orphans of clothing ? You are to go with robbers." What confusion for a matron, or a young person who held a good reputation : " Go there with the accomplices of your sin ; you could hide your irregularities from the eyes of men, but not from those of God. ' *Exibunt angeli et separabunt.*' " Beloved, reflect if the citation be so terrible and all that precedes judgment, what will be the judgment itself ? Reflect, you by necessity are to be present at this great extremity : this is of faith. What then shall be your lot ? When resuscitated, you will again resume your body and bones ; you will do so with joy if saved, or with despair if a reprobate : you will go to the valley of Josaphat with a certainty of being blessed or cursed. What place then do you think will be assigned to you by the angel—at the right or the left—amongst the chaste, humble, and devout, or the scandalous, the interested, and dishonest ? O God ! what a great subject is this ? In this great peril, can you thought-

lessly live and smile, and on the contrary not tremble from head to foot?

Rupert Holkot writes (*book Sap. c. i., p. 31.*) that three travellers once walking by the valley of Josaphat, one of them sitting on a stone, said smiling: "As this is the place of the last judgment, by anticipation I will choose my place, to be at my ease and listen:" when raising his eyes to Heaven, he sees the Son of God in the air, with a terrible countenance, in the act of judging: the wretched man was so struck with terror, that he fell in a faint on the earth: having come to himself he was struck with astonishment, and never more laughed: even if the word judgment were pronounced in his presence, he burst into tears, grew pale, fainted, and appeared more dead than alive. If then, a shadow only of judgment sufficed to cause a swoon, how is it, that a man believing and meditating seriously on the same judgment, does not conceive a holy fear which may serve to detach him from every human pleasure, and to better his ways?

SECOND POINT.

The trial of the misdeeds of men in the general judgment.

All mankind being re-united, and wisely distributed by the angels in the valley of Josaphat, finally, Christ as judge, will descend from Heaven: all beholding him will burst into tears. "Plangent omnes tribus terræ." Why so? They will see their God, not as at first, compassionate and amiable, but angry and severe. As David, before going out to battle

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against the Philistines, deposed his royal robes, and dressed himself like a warrior, and put on a helmet instead of a crown, armour instead of a mantle, and the sword instead of a sceptre—"Mutavit habitum suum et ingressus est bellum.—(3 *Kings* ii., 2,) the Redeemer, having deposed the thorns and nails and all appearance of a loving father, will be clothed as a most severe judge. "Indutis vestimentis ultionis."—(*Isa.* lix., 16.) He will be seated on a dark cloud, armed with zeal. "Accipiet armaturam zelus illius."—(*Sap.* v.) He will have for breastplate, incorruptible justice; for sceptre, rectitude of mind; for shield, unchangeable equity; for lance to wound, anger.—(*Sap.* v., 21.) Before, he will have fire; around, whirlwinds and tempests; for his army, all the creatures of the world armed against sinners. What more? He will have standing by him his cross, to serve as a reproof to the ingratitude of those who will not profit by the passion and the blood of the Redeemer, with which they could have easily been saved.—(*Num.* xvii.) For the same motive he has chosen for the theatre of his great judgment, the valley of Josaphat, situated opposite to the mountains, Olivet, where the redemption of man commenced, and Calvary, where it terminated. The wicked seeing these two mountains, will be convinced of their own perversity, and the remembrance of Christ crucified will also confuse and be a reproach to them; he could have been their salvation and their glory. Oh! what terror. If only to meditate on these things makes one shudder, what will it be to experience them? No sooner shall Christ cruci-

fied appear in this terrible manner as judge, than he will act on souls in the same way, as the sun does on material creatures: before the dawn of day a most obscure night envelops the universe, white cannot be distinguished from black, what is soiled from what is clean, what is precious from what is vile. scarcely has the sun appeared on the horizon, than instantly is discovered all that is awkward, muddy, or graceless.

The same will happen in souls. Before the Sun of Justice shall appear in judgment, their failings will not be seen; nor will it be known who was honest or dishonest, who was interested or who just, who was good or who impious. So soon as the Divine Sun appears, all the good will be discovered, and all the evil, in each soul. St. Bernard said with reason that the punishment of the most enormous sins will be God, since he, being light, will discover them to the whole world. "*Turpium poena Deus est, lux est enim.*" What confusion will it be for the sinner, when, in the light of the divine countenance, he will clearly know all his most hidden sins, and he will see them discovered to the eyes of the whole world.

Xifilino and Dion write of Nero, that he was not less extravagant than cruel. Once, having called to him senators most conspicuous for their age and employments, he begged of them to go instantly to the public square, and dance in the costume of comedians. They protested it would be contrary to decorum and to the dignity of their rank as senators, and that they should thereby become a fable to the

vulgar. Nero replied : " It is to be done ; for I so wish it." They complied, wearing masks and dresses to disguise themselves ; but in the midst of the most ridiculous part of the dance, guards raised the masks, and the unhappy senators were exposed to the hisses and taunts of the populace. Their confusion was so great, that not a few of them, according to Dion, were struck dead. What shame, then, will it be for sinners, at the general judgment, when the mask of their wickedness shall be removed, and they known for what they really were, not what they appeared to be. Parents, friends, and companions, will say : " See him who was thought a good man—a saint ; he was nothing but a hypocrite. See her who was esteemed chaste, into what a precipice she has fallen ! Who should have believed it ! See him whom we believed a mirror of honour, an oracle in counsel ; how many treasons did he commit ? how many deceits ? how many thefts ?"

O God ! what confusion will this be ! The most humble St. Bernard used to say of himself : " What confusion for me, when it shall be said : ' Behold the man and his works.' " This will be the greatest of all pains, even in hell, with which, as St. Thomas of Villanova says, (*Conc. 1 Ad:ent.*) man is chastised as man ; for the other pains of the damned might be common with beasts, which can be wounded, burnt, and tormented, but not afflicted with shame and confusion.

Oh ! how much this manifestation of sins and this confusion of sinners will be rendered more tormenting to the reprobate, when Christ, as Judge,

will publicly denounce each ! God says, by the mouth of the prophet Joel, (iii., 2,) that he will in a manner argue, to convince the wicked in their misdeeds. O impious man ! come and defend yourself, if you can, from your evil ways. The culprit will, doubtless, say : " Ah ! Lord, you well know how feeble I was, and badly inclined." Christ will answer : " Did I not strengthen you with my grace ? " " I was noble, young, and in the midst of a thousand occasions of sinning," the sinner will allege. " Were not Lewis of France and Casimir of Poland noble, young, and in the midst of the delights of a kingdom ; notwithstanding they were not only good but saints ? Why then did you not do as much ? You waited for old age to live well ; what rashness : did you not know that life is short and uncertain ? " " I confided much in your clemency." " Perfidious creature ! you confided in my clemency to become more impious." " The devil strongly instigated me by the incentives of seven capital sins." " Did not your angel-guardian strongly defend you by his counsels ? had you not the seven sacraments as preservatives against the seven capital sins ? Answer then : ' Quid vultis mecum judicio contendere ? ' ' Why would you contend with me in judgment ? ' "—(*Jer. ii.*) Could the sinner even deny his actual guilt ? No. God would immediately convict him as witness of his evil deeds, and those of his accomplices. When king Saul, contrary to the command of God, who ordered him to put to fire and sword all the booty he had taken from the Amalekites, reserved the best cattle and the most precious furniture, he was immediately reprehended

by the prophet Samuel : then the king, overcome with shame, denied his faults, saying : "Implevi verbum Domini :—" "I have fulfilled the word of the Lord."—(2 *Reg.* xiv.) The prophet replied : "Tell me what means the bleating of those sheep? Do you not hear so many voices crying out against you? The cattle even accuse you of falsehood." In the same manner God will say to the sinner : "Do you not hear the voice of the poor saying, you were our tyrant; we were hungry, you did not feed us; naked, you did not clothe us. Labourers will exclaim, you did not pay our wages : Orients and widows will utter, you robbed us of our substance. Citizens will allege, you scandalized us by your irregularities." When the Apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier, saw his passage to China frustrated by the cupidity of the Prefect of Malacca, he threatened to accuse him in the Valley of Josaphat.

Miserable sinners ! thus convicted by God, accused by creatures, disgraced before heaven and earth, not being able longer to support so much confusion, they will cry out to the mountains to fall and bury them, to hide them from the face of God and man. "Montes cadite super nos." Meditate, beloved, seriously on this point : reflect, if you continue to live irregularly, what shall be your confusion at the last day ? What excuse can you give to Christ, as judge, after having been so favoured by him, so enlightened by celestial illustrations, and so provided with spiritual means to be saved ? The gentiles or the Turks would in some degree excuse themselves, saying, they did not know the divine law, and that they were born among

pagans : but, says Villanova, what will you answer ? If in the retirement of spiritual exercises, you do not settle the accounts of your soul or prepare to answer the interrogations of Christ your judge, how can you do so during the remainder of the year, in the midst of a thousand distractions and a thousand occupations ? Let us settle the affairs of our conscience with God, now that he is a father ; let us not wait for the time when he will be judge. Yes, my most amiable and merciful Redeemer, here I am humbled and weeping at your feet.

THIRD POINT.

The last definite sentence.

After God shall have justified to the world the reasons of his providence : after he shall have convicted and confounded sinners, he will finally pronounce the last definitive sentence concerning the eternity of each. Oh ! what a terrible sound this will be. God said heretofore by the mouth of Isaiah : "I have always been silent, and my patience appears to have exceeded ; now, indeed, I will speak ; and desolate the world." How can this be, O Lord ? says St. Augustine, (*Hom. de tribul. iii.*) Have you not spoken by so many prophets, threats, chastisements ? Did you not speak, by the plagues of Egypt, or by the deluge of fire which descended on the unfortunate Pentapolis, or by the deluge of water in which the universe was drowned ? He again supposes Christ answers, that all he said before was as if he were mute, with regard to the most terrible words

he will pronounce, giving the final sentence on the eternity of each one. Oh ! this indeed will be the terrific speaking of God—every word will be a thunderbolt, which will strike terror into every mind, and consume all hearts.

In preceding ages God has often spoken with words of thunder—"Intonuit de cœlo Dominus."—(*Ps.* xvii., 14 :) yet this may be considered his time of silence: "In diebus silentii ejus."—(*Esther* xiv., 16 ;) whereas the period of the last judgment can well be called the time of his pomp and of his ostentation: "In diebus ostentationis ejus."—(*Esther* xvi.) God, then, in person, and with his own mouth, without committing to others the publication of his eternal and irrevocable decrees, turning first to the right towards his elect, with a joyful and most amiable countenance, "Come," he will say, "come to the eternal kingdom, destined as a reward for your virtues and your merits. Come, O humble brethren, devout women, penitent sinners ; come, for you are blessed by me, and by my eternal Father. Blessed a thousand times the sufferings you endured for my love. Blessed the alms with which you nourished me, in the person of my poor—relieved my thirst, and clothed my poverty. 'Come, O ye blessed of my Father, come and possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.'" After this saying, these noble souls, full of light and glory, will be seen ascending slowly with the angels of heaven.

We should reflect, with St. Bernard, that it is not without great mystery God sends the blessed to

Heaven, before the cursed to hell; for he wishes that, seeing the happiness of the elect, the reprobate may always know the great good they have lost by their sins. While the reprobate, on the left hand, will be foaming with rage and envy—a brother seeing his brother going, with so much joy, to Heaven: a husband, his consort: a friend, another friend; Christ, the judge, will turn towards them, (*Ps. xx., 20*;) “In tempestate vultus sui,” as David says, full of fire and fury, he will pronounce that decree, which in a few words contains a group of thunderbolts. “Go,” he will say, “ye cursed, into eternal fire; go, depart from me, for I will no longer see you—depart.” Ah! what a bitter separation. From whom have they to depart? From just men; from angels; from Mary; but above all, from God.

Oh! what anguish! Far, then, from God, who is all, they are to be deprived of every good. “Ye cursed.” If at least they received the blessing of God before they depart from him, that going away blessed they might be consoled—“No,” says God, before they suffer, I curse them as enemies, as rebels, as ungrateful. Into fire—departing from God, whither are they to go? Into a fire which devours them, but does not enlighten them—torments, but does not kill them. “Æternum.” For how long? Always, without ever being extinguished, either for a certain number of hours, or for a multitude of years, or for millions of centuries; never—never—never. Miserable, unfortunate, disgraced, they are to depart. From whom? From God. How? Cursed.

Whither? To fire. For how long? For all eternity. Oh! what a condemnation. O God! what punishment. O God! what eternity.

This most terrible sentence being pronounced by God, it will be approved as most just by all the angels, saints, and just souls, who will come to judge, even sinners, according to the words.—(*Wisdom* iii., 8.) “Judicabunt justi nationes:” as the angelic doctor St. Thomas explains.—(*Opusc.* ii.) So great then will be the horror, confusion, and pain of the unfortunate and impious, that not being able any longer to support the countenance of an irritated God, who thus condemns them, and thunders at them in union with his whole heavenly court, they will not wait to be dragged by the devils into hell, they will go there of their own accord. “Ibunt in suplicium æternum:” They will go to eternal torments, thinking it a less evil to be in hell, than at that tremendous judgment: this is testified by Theodoret, Theophilact, and Boccade, after Silvera in (*Apoc. qu. xv., num. 137.*)

Beloved, enter into yourself, and thus discourse: It is of faith, that one day I must appear at this great judgment. I am to be there strictly examined and irrevocably judged, and I know not what sentence shall be mine, of life or of death. Oh! what a risk. How can I entertain this great thought, live with such irregularity, and not tremble? The primitive saints of the Church, feared so from this reflection, as to cause the blood to freeze in their veins. St. Bernard was not ashamed to acknowledge him-

self amongst them. I, a miserable sinner, wish to be in peace and security, while the most innocent and penitent saints have trembled.

The famous Pelagia, having heard a sermon preached by St Nonnus, on the general judgment, was not only converted, but to practise more severe penance for her sins, she built a small cell on Mount Olivet, whence might be seen the whole valley of Josaphat : when the devil tormented her with some thought of former intemperance, opening her window, "Consider, O miserable Pelagia," said she, "this theatre of your future judgment ; you will here find yourself, and know not whether at the right or left. Come then, afflict yourself, to chase away the diabolical temptation." You also, when assailed by some temptation or danger of offending God, turn, at least in thought, to the valley of Josaphat : how much will your mind be strengthened ? St. Jerome, even that great saint and doctor of the Church, to tame his passions, imagined he always heard the sound of that deadly trumpet, which is to recall the dead from their tombs. Why not use the remedy he found available ?

It is related that a great king when travelling, met two poor, discalced holy hermits : while viewing them, he thought—"Oh ! how much better these shall fare at the day of judgment than myself : " alighting from his horse, he placed himself on his knees before them, and kissed their hands. The courtiers were offended, thinking it beneath his majesty, and caused the prince his brother, to expostulate with him. The king was silent, but the following night he had

a trumpet sounded before his brother's palace, to that fatal air usually played when malefactors are condemned to death. The wretched prince sprung from his couch, and threw himself at the king's feet to know the cause of that sound, and of his condemnation. The king thus responded: "You, though innocent, fear so much the anger of a brother, and you are surprised that I should honour those hermits, who by their sanctity, remind me, a culprit, of the great judgment of God."

Ah! how much would it import you to reflect often on the terror of the last trumpet; how much would it avail you to conceive a holy fear of God, and to make good use of time, which you have now, to make your peace with God by prayer? In that last day no one could or dare do it. Say then to God: "My most sweet Saviour, I embrace your most holy wounds, and I most humbly beg of you, through the merits of your divine blood, shed for me, to forgive me my sins, that I may not have reason to fear at the day of judgment."

COLLOQUY.

Great God of terrible majesty, eternal Judge of the living and the dead, here I am at your feet, confused and astounded at the remembrance of your terrible judgment: "*A judiciis tuis timui.*" Ah! I am too much ashamed to appear before your tribunal, guilty of so many sins. Your prophet Jeremiah consoles me, however, (ix., 24,) with these words: "*Ego Dominus, qui facio misericordiam et judicium:*" "I am the Lord, the author of mercy

and of judgment." You, who one day will act as judge, be now a merciful Father; indulge me now, then weigh in the balance of your cross the sins I have committed. As for myself, I confess I have deserved the most grievous chastisements, and I protest I am the most wicked creature in the world. You are my good Father, and I have disobeyed you; you are my Lord, and I have despised you; you are my Redeemer whom I have crucified; you are my God against whom I have sinned. I deserve certainly, that you should chase me away with this sentence: "*Ite maledicti*:" "Go you accursed." But those feet which have been wounded for me, will never admit it, nor will your loving heart ever consent to it. What do you say then—here is the sentence: "*Nolo mortem peccatoris*." No, I do not wish that the sinner should die, how many faults soever he may have committed. O infinite goodness! O love without comparison! But what do you wish, Lord? "I only will that he be converted and lead the life of grace: '*Sed ut convertatur; et vivat*.'" Let the sinner return to me, and I forgive him; let the enemy come, and I embrace him; let Judas come and I embrace him." O mercy, benignity, and charity of a God, how worthy of you! Ah! my God, you wish that I should live. I should rather die of contrition, and die of pure love for you; but as you wish that I should live, I will lead a new life; I will live dead to the world, and to my passions, and live solely to you, who are the way, the truth, and the life. Amen.

MEDITATION XII.

On Hell.

INTRODUCTION.

THE great patriarch St. Ignatius used to say : " Whoever warms himself often at the fire of hell, will not fall into it." And with good reason ; for, to bridle the strongest passions and overcome great temptations, which would plunge man into perdition, there is no more powerful thought than that of eternal flames. Thus, the greatest saints have derived advantage from renewing often the memory of them. St. John Chrysostom, in the room he inhabited, and in which he slept, always had hell painted in glaring colours : at every glance and in every action he wished to recal to mind this salutary thought.

St. Jerome, writing to Eustochium, admits that the true cause which excited him to leave Rome and bury himself in a cave, was the fear of hell. St. Augustine, discoursing on hell, affrighted his hearers by his palpitations more than by his words ; for, trembling from head to foot, he did not blush to acknowledge that he strongly feared hell. St. Bernard, having once meditated on hell, made a resolution never to laugh again during life.

If the saints have so much feared hell, how much more should not sinners do so, who are so ruled by their passions and so frail on every occasion ! How much more should you be terrified, who doubtless should long since have gone to hell ! And you are

not there because God in his infinite goodness did not cause you to die after committing mortal sin, as he has done to so many others.

St. Augustine weeping said to God: "A million of times thou couldst have damned me if thou hadst wished it?"

Imagine what could never happen, namely, that God should send his message by an angel to a damned soul: "Come, God in his infinite mercy allows thee to return to life for eight days, so that, making the spiritual exercises, thou mayest do penance for thy sins." What would he not do in those few days of life? Understand well, then, O beloved! God has conferred on you a much greater benefit in not sending you to hell when you deserved it, and in giving you all this time for penance, than if he first sent you to hell, and afterwards permitted you to return to life to satisfy for your sins. Consequently, you ought, in gratitude to God, apply with greater fervour to the amendment of your life, and act so that the fire of hell may extinguish the fire of your passions, according to the saying of Tertullian.
—(I. *de Pudic.*)

Fire is often extinguished by discharging muskets into the midst of the flames.

We shall divide this meditation into three points, and consider: 1. How great the pains of hell must be. 2. What must be in hell the pains of the senses of the body. 3. What are the pains in hell of the powers of the soul.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us fancy we see hell, and imagine what is worst to behold—a horrible cavern, full of black flames, sulphur, devils, dragons, fire, swords, arrows, and innumerable damned, who roar in despair. Imagine the worst you can; then say: “All this is nothing if compared to hell.”

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say: “Ah! my God, you who have the keys of death and hell, since you have said: ‘*Et habeo claves mortis et inferni*’—(*Apoc. i., 18*): I beg of you, through the bowels of your mercy, that you keep constantly shut for me the gates of hell, and act so that hell may engender in my heart your holy fear, as your Chrysostom says.”

FIRST POINT.

How great the pains of hell must be.

In order that what is related of hell in the holy Scripture and the holy Fathers, and whatever can be said by preachers, may not appear exaggerated, but be considered—as it certainly is—as nothing compared to the reality, let us first examine the reason whence it clearly follows that the pains of the damned must be very great and inexplicable.

The first reason is, because in hell the honour of an outraged God is to be restored on a miserable creature. To understand this, imagine that a great king, whilst asleep, is bitten by a venomous scorpion. From the pain of the wound, he rises and

calls the surgeons, who, having well examined it, says: "Sacred majesty, you are to die: the poison has already insinuated itself into the veins; art has no means to extract it: you are dead." "I dead!" replies the king; "and murdered by a vile worm! I declare that I will revenge myself on this vile worm, and cause it to be tormented, as is suitable for the life of a murdered king. Let the scorpion be found."

The entire apartment is then searched for the guilty worm. What punishment, then, can be inflicted sufficient to atone for the death of a king? He is cut, crushed, trampled, burnt to ashes; all is nothing, and insufficient to satisfy for that great crime.

The sinner is a most vile worm. By sinning he crucified anew the King of kings—the Redeemer.—(*Heb. xi., 6.*) If not in effect, at least with affection, he acted in a hostile manner against God. What punishment then shall be given him in hell, to repair the great outrage offered to God? Flames, swords, devils? All is little—all is nothing.

He who gave a mortal wound to William, Prince of Orange, was fastened on high by the extremities of his two thumbs, with a hundred pounds of lead attached to his toes. Then he was beaten with iron rods till he bled. Being loosened, very long needles were threaded, and passed through his nails and skin. The following day his hairs were plucked out one by one, and he was exposed to a slow fire. Finally, he was impaled; and, during his agony, the hand that inflicted the wound was burnt with plates of iron.

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If such pain was adjudged to him who had presumed to wound a prince, what torments should be given in hell to him who outraged a crucified God?

The second reason is, that not only the outrage offered to God is to be expiated on a wretched damned soul, but the glory of Divine justice is to be exalted by making known to all the blessed in heaven, what God can do when he wishes to take revenge on his rebels. “*Scietis quia ego sum Dominus percutiens.*”—(*Ezech. ii., 9.*) Reason then thus: “When God wished to show forth his omnipotence, he created this beautiful world: his mercy went so far, that he became man in a stable, and caused himself to be crucified on Calvary. Now that he intends to show forth his justice in hell by the atrocity of torments, what will he do?”

Add another reflection: “When God chastised sinners on earth, he always combined mercy with justice, and he did not punish them to the extent of his rigour.—(*Job xxxv., 15.*) And yet what has he done when chastising in this more gentle manner? He drowned the world with a deluge of water. He consumed Pentapolis with a deluge of fire, and he depopulated kingdoms by the plague. What then will he not do, when he shall show forth in hell the whole extent of his rigour?”

God afflicted holy Job, by taking from him his children, goods, health—everything. It is said this was a slight stroke of the divine hand: “*Manus Domini tetigit me.*”—(*Job xix., 21.*) God threatened Jerusalem, by Ezechiel, with most fatal ruin, by fire and sword; this is called “a drop of his

fury.”—(*Ezech. xx.*, 76.) He punished the same Jerusalem with imprisonment of its citizens, and the slaughter of one hundred and sixty thousand of them : it is written : “ This was but a small effect of Divine wrath.”—(*2 Mac. v.*, 17.) What then shall it be when the whole weight of Divine anger shall descend on the damned, to torment them inexorably ? “ *Ira Dei manet super eos.*”

Finally, when God proposed to make trial of his friends on earth, how much sickness and persecution did he not send them ? It suffices that Job proceeded so far as to say : “ Ah ! Lord, you show yourself too severe towards me : “ *Mutatus es mihi in crudelem.*”—(*Job xxx.*, 31.) What did he let befall his favourites, the martyrs ? that cruel tyrants and fierce executioners should torment them, and murder them in a thousand ways by racks, and boiling cauldrons, and famished wild beasts. If to try his friends, God made them suffer pains so atrocious, what will he do hereafter to torment his enemies in hell, and by their sufferings to exalt his own glory ?

Third reason : God knows sin clearly, and he hates the sinner with a sovereign hatred : he has infinite power to chastise him, and he purposes to chastise him most severely : he has therefore formed hell as the centre of all evils : “ *Locum tormentorum,*” on which he sheds every pain and calamity.—(*Job xx.*, 24.) As he has reunited every good in heaven—“ *Ostendam tibi omne bonum*”—(*Deut. xxxii.*, 23)—so he has reunited every evil in hell. God wishes to exercise sinners as much by his justice, as he had previously shown mercy to them : “ *Effun-*

dens iram secundum misericordiam.”—(*Eccl.* xvi., 12.) Was not the mercy first shown by God to sinners infinite? Who can deny it? He went so far as to shed all the blood of his veins to save them! If then the rigour of his justice is to be as great in punishing them, what will it not be? With what inexplicable torments will this rigour show itself: “Tempore furoris:” “In the time of his fury?”—(*Jertui* xviii., 33.)

Beloved, are not those reasons most clear? Can they be denied? Who, possessed of common sense, can deny that the pains of hell transcend our understanding? All that can be said of them, so far from exaggerating, rather falls far short of the truth. This being supposed, let us meditate particularly on the torments of hell.

SECOND POINT.

What are the pains of the senses of the body in Hell.

Consider the first entrance of a damned soul into hell. Imagine that a delicate man, who has had all the conveniences and pleasures of the world, placed on a bed of down, under splendid drapery, dies in disgrace with God. At his entrance into that horrible chaos, on first feeling the tortures and scorching of that insufferable and devouring fire, on first seeing those horrible devils, what will he say? “Wretched and unhappy man that I am, whither have I come?” “O ubi sum!” He will repeat the words of St. Bernard: “O ubi non sum!” “O where I am!” “How is it possible that I can re-

main here? Ah! these torments are not for me, who am used to delights!" "O ubi sum! O ubi non sum!" "O where I am! O where I am not! O the place of torments where I am! O the soft couch and the bed of down, on which I am no longer!" "Ah! I cannot bear any longer, I cannot remain here!" Whether he wills it or not, in spite of himself, he must remain there to roar in despair for all eternity. O terror! O horror! The miserable emperor Zeno, buried alive in a tomb, by Arianna his consort, while overcome with wine, and in a most profound sleep. When he awoke and perceived nothing but darkness, felt nothing but bones, surrounded with the foetid odour of dead bodies, he began to sob and roar: "Ah! misere-mini mei et aperite mihi!" "Ah! take pity on me and open for me." "Oh! where am I? Courtiers, chamberlains, friends, for pity sake open to me. O my vassals! have pity on me." Finding he was not heard by any one, he gives way to the greatest fury and despair; he tears his flesh with his own teeth, and striking his head violently against the wall, shatters his brains and kills himself.—(*Cedronus*.) Ah! unhappy damned soul! On first finding himself in hell, he sobs and roars, and wishes to find pity, but not being able to succeed, he des-pairs, tears his flesh with his teeth—(*Isa. ix., 20*)—but he cannot die. Death is a thousand times removed from him.

Consider then, in particular, the pains of hell.

1. The place: this is a horrible and terrific

cavern, situated in the centre of the earth. In the Divine Scripture, at one time it is called a place of torments, "*locum tormentorum*:" at another, "well of the abyss," or a lake or river of fire, in which the damned are immersed like fishes in the sea: frequently it is called, "*Gehenna ignis*." Why so? Gehenna was an extensive valley situated beyond the walls of Jerusalem, in which the impious Manasses had erected a great column of bronze, in honour of the idol Moloch. Mothers often sacrificed their children to it, burning them alive, so that king Josias, heir of the kingdom, condemned this abominable valley of Gehenna. "*Contaminavit Gehennam*:" "*Defiled Gehenna*." — (*4 Kings xciii.*;) having overthrown that infamous symbol, he ordered all the filth of Jerusalem, and all the dead bodies to be thrown there. Hell then is called Gehenna, for in that voracious subterranean cavern, all the filth of the world is collected and enclosed there, without exhalation or air, which must produce a fœtid pestilence. Hell is, besides, a most obscure prison and very narrow, considering the innumerable damned souls: they have to remain immoveable, one over the other. "*Sicut oves in inferno positi sunt*:" "*They are placed in hell like sheep*." — (*Ps. xlviii., 15.*)

The heretics of Maestricht girded the arms and legs of three fathers of the Society of Jesus with circles studded with points of needles, so that they could not move without feeling the pricking of the needles: they then enkindled a large fire around them, and caused them to die slowly. Oh! what

torture. How much greater is that of the damned, who being in a place full of flames and tortures, encounter some new torment wherever they move?

2. The companions: what a torture it would be, if two capital enemies remained chained together in a ship for an entire life? What then will it be, to remain in company with innumerable enemies for all eternity, who hate each other mortally? These are, first, the devils, sworn enemies of man, who in hell have power from God to tear and torment the damned as much as they please. Second, the accomplices in the same sin, who will blaspheme: these wicked companions will curse and tear one another. The scandalous mother will curse the daughter, and the vain daughter will curse the mother who taught her vanity and scandal. Third, those who were guilty of the same faults; for they will be placed together to burn like so many logs of wood: the self-seekers with the self-seekers; the dishonest with the dishonest; gamblers with gamblers. "Colligite fasciculos ad comburendum." A wicked wretch said: "If I am damned, I shall not be alone, I shall have many companions with me." Ah! fool, do you not know that every companion will be for you a new torment and tormentor? You have not courage to live in a cloister of strict observance, where you would have several companions, all good and holy; and how will you remain in hell with a crowd of damned, each of whom will be a new sword to wound and afflict you? Fourth, finally, the wild beasts, dragons, and horrible monsters, who torment and slaughter. The people of Japan used to fill a ditch with serpents, and then

make the martyrs remain there, with their head downwards. Oh! what barbarity. The ancients allotted this punishment to parricides: they enclosed them in a leather sack with a dog, a viper, and an ape, and then threw them into the sea. Oh! what a martyrdom! How much greater will be the torments of the damned, to be obliged to remain with innumerable monsters? Oh! how much more cruel!

3. The sight is tormented by frightful devils: a holy religious saw at death two so monstrous and ugly devils, that he cried out, saying, that rather than see them again, he would walk till the day of judgment on fire of sulphur and melted metal. Second, by great darkness, much worse than that of the Egyptians, by a dense and black smoke which has no exit, and which will prevent the miserable damned from breathing." "Impii in tenebris conitescunt."—(1 Kings ii.) Third, inconsolable and unceasing tears of fire. Fourth, by the view of those whom they counselled or induced to commit sin, and of those who were the cause of their sinning and being damned.

St. Bridget, (*b. VI. Revel. lii.*), said that she saw a woman coming out of a lake of fire, and crying out to her daughter, who was still alive: "Ah, daughter, no longer daughter, but venomous serpent! Wretch that I am for having brought you forth, but much more so for having taught you to commit sin; so often as you return to the commission of sin, from the bad example I gave you, my pains are as often renewed with rigour."

4. The hearing is continually tormented with

ferocious howling, inconsolable sobs, rage, blasphemies, from the despair of those in that horrible abyss. O what great punishment is this !

Plutarch writes of Scylla, that one day he caused six thousand persons to be collected into an enclosed place, and whilst he closed his speech in the senate, caused them all to be murdered, by being cut to pieces. O God ! what cries, what weeping, what rage did they not feel in that horrible slaughter ? How much worse is that which is heard in hell ?

5. The scent is tormented by the odour of sulphur, and by the noisesomeness of all the sewers of the world, which crawl into that abyss, and by the bad odour of the damned, which is much worse than the most putrid dead bodies. One damned soul alone, says St. Bonaventure, if he came into the world, would suffice to infect the entire of it. What odour, then, will exhale from innumerable damned souls, united in one enclosure ?

It is related in the life of St. Walburga, that a murderer, after having killed a pilgrim, took him in his arms to bury him in a remote place ; but the murdered body clasped him so strongly, that the wretched assassin could not by any means detach himself from it, even with the sword ; so that the mangled body caused him to die by its intolerable scent.—(*Bolland.*, 23 Jan.)

6. The taste, in punishment of gluttony and intemperance, murmuring and dishonest words, is tormented by ravenous hunger. “Famem patientur ut canes :” “They shall suffer hunger like dogs.” Such hunger that each one will tear his own flesh

with his teeth : "Unusquisque carnem brachii sui vorabit."—(*Isa.* ix., 20.) Tormented by insupportable thirst, Dives, from hell, asked nothing of Abraham but a drop of water : "Ut refrigeret linguam meam : " "That it might relieve my tongue," while tormented with gall, wormwood, and disgusting liquors.

The Roman tyrants forced several martyrs to drink boiling resin and liquefied metals. Oh ! how much worse will the devils torment the damned.

7. The feeling, for pleasures and excessive delights enjoyed in the world, is tormented by swords, pincers, bites, tearing of vipers and dragons, horrible blows given by devils : "Vadent et venient super eum horribiles."—(*Job.*) Above all, the damned are tormented by so active a fire, that it appears rather spirit and quintessence of fire : "In spiritu ardoris ;" such a fire, that a mountain of bronze thrown into it would dissolve in one instant ; a fire which possesses the evil of burning and tormenting, but has not the good of enlightening and consuming ; a fire which unites all torments, and the sufferings caused by all sorts of sickness, by wounds, even by frost and snow. "Nomine ignis," says the angelic doctor, "omnis afflictio designatur : " "By the name fire, all manner of affliction is designated."—(*App. q.*, xcvi.) This fire intimately penetrates and devours the damned : "Ante faciem ejus ignis vorans."—(*Joel* xxiii.) As food devoured by a wild beast becomes the same substance as the animal ; so the damned, devoured by fire, become burning coals : elsewhere it is expressed, they shall

be salted by fire: "Salis ardore comburens."—(*Deut.* xxix., 23.) Salt, when rubbed on flesh, profoundly penetrates it; fire acts in a similar manner on the bodies of those miserable creatures. The damned, then, no longer appears a man, but a moving coal, in a sea of fire; he even seems in miniature an animated hell: "Pones eos ut clibanum ignis." The brains will boil as in a vessel, the blood in the veins, the intestines in the body. O God! what terror! What horror! Otho, King of Bohemia, caused one of his pages to be wrapped in an oiled sheet, then burned alive like a lighted torch, for not being attentive to awaken him from sleep.

King Wenceslaus caused one of his servants, who had not prepared his food well, to be placed on a spit, and turned on a slow fire—(*In magno Chronic Belgico*, p 273.) Oh! how much more horrible is the fire of hell! What is still worse, the damned have to suffer these great evils altogether. In this life one person cannot suffer every sickness, such as those which proceed from contrary causes; he cannot suffer every torment at the same time, nor for a long period, for weak nature, unable to bear it, escapes all by death. If in summer he suffers from heat, he cannot at the same time be exposed to the frost of winter; so of the rest. In hell it is not so; heat and cold, hunger and torture—every evil is there. God said it in *Deuteronomy* (i., 18): O hell! hell! how terrific—how frightful you are! Beloved, let us discourse seriously on this point. Do you believe or disbelieve these things? Are these fables or enigmas, or are they evangelical truths? Ah! they

cannot be discredited. Jesus Christ has said them, faith teaches them all, the Scriptures and theologians attest them. What folly then to wish to purchase for a momentary pleasure torments which are so great and eternal: "Momentaneo risu perpetuus fletus emitur." "For a moment's laugh endless weeping is purchased."—(*Damian, book V., ep. 2.*)

If a person said—"If you throw yourself into a burning furnace, I will give you a kingdom;" who would be so thoughtless as to do so? The devil then says: "If you throw yourself into hell, I will give you a little pleasure, in yielding to your passion;" and you will be so void of reason as to do it? "You cannot bear," says the Carthusian, in astonishment (*Sup. art. 7*), "to pass your finger in the flame of a lighted candle, yet you show so little fear to dwell in horrible flames in hell." Is not this the greatest blindness and folly of man? How well the three noble religious youths answered their wicked companions, who, as the Carthusian relates, strongly tempted them to abandon religious life, saying: "Your pride is too severe, you are too delicate, this kind of life is not fit for you:" the youths not heeding them, thus repulsed the wicked suggestions. One answered: "If I cannot now bear with religious observance, how shall I suffer hereafter the pains of hell?" The second responded: "For this reason, because I am delicate and cannot bear much, I prefer this little severity for the love of God, rather than eternal suffering, with the hatred and disgrace of God." Finally, the third said: "I can suffer in this world, for I have God to assist

me with his grace, but in hell the wretched damned souls are entirely abandoned by God." Oh! what beautiful sentiments. Each should repeat them to himself. "I am delicate; I cannot suffer a little for God: and how shall I suffer in hell all evils, and being hated and repulsed by God?"

Ah! let us not add by our sins wood to the fire of hell; on the contrary, let us extinguish it by fervent penance: let us avail ourselves of the light of those eternal flames, as a guide to walk well in the Divine precepts.—(*Isa. l.*)

THIRD POINT.

What are the punishments of the soul in Hell?

The angelic doctor teaches, (12, *q. xiii., art. 4.*) that there is no creature so miserable and unhappy who has not some participation of the Divine goodness: of the goods communicated by God, some belong to the essence and some to the perfection of nature: those goods which belong to perfection are lost by sin, and those which relate to the essence are left for greater chastisement. "Bonum naturæ nec tollitur, nec diminuitur per peccatum:" says the angelic doctor. (12, *q. lxxxi., art. 1.*) In the damned there is the good of existence, which being always unhappy, is the more tormenting: there is life, but it serves as a greater torment, being always miserable, without hope of terminating these miseries by death: there is the use of the three powers of the soul, the memory, understanding, and will, which good will cause still greater affliction.

1. The memory will be hell in miniature for the damned, for he will remember his past pleasures: although on earth the recollection of former good often recreates the fancy, to the damned it is a new cause of martyrdom, for he will say within himself: "Who would believe it, that after so many delights, I should find myself in so many torments? Pleasures have passed like a dream, and these torments never are to finish. I was once courted, having been rich and noble, now I am subjected to all ignominies and sufferings." Oh! what inexpressible pain! Abraham reminded Dives of the delights he had enjoyed in the world. "Recordare, quod recepisti bona in vita tua:" "Remember that you received good things in your life."

2. He will remember for how little he was damned, namely, for a momentary pleasure, for giving way to a passion which passed like lightning, and "for so little," he will say, "I have to suffer so much." When unfortunate Esau found he had forfeited his birthright for nothing, he howled like a person in despair, and roared like a lion. "Irrugit clamore magno."—(*Gen. xxvii.*, 34.)

When miserable Jonathan saw himself condemned to death, solely for having tasted some drops of honey against the orders of his father, king Saul, he could not contain himself: he said, with sobs, "What! must such a one as I am die? For what reason? For tasting a few drops of honey. Oh! this is a subject of grief beyond expression."—(1 *Kings* xiv., 19.)

What then will be the agony and rage of a damned

soul, remembering the slight cause, and the short pleasures for which he finds himself in so horrible a hell?

Once, a damned soul appeared to blessed Humbert, covered with a black mantle: having heaved a profound sigh, he said, that the hell of hells to him, was the remembrance of having been damned for a fault of short duration.

The lost soul will remember with how little trouble he could have preserved himself from hell, and he omitted doing so. He will repeat to himself: "No more was necessary to avoid being damned, but to make a good confession. What great labour would this be? Only to overcome a little shame, and I did not do it. Oh! how foolish I was. How often did I clearly hear it in sermons: did I not frequently meditate on it in the spiritual exercises? Alas! without fruit. How many have committed much greater sins than I have? As they were wise enough to confess them and do penance, they are in Paradise. I alone have been a fool, I cannot complain of any one but myself." With unavailing repentance his lamentations will be greater than those of *Job*. (xvii., 11.)

The intellect will also be tormented in several ways, by most fatal reflections, which he will make concerning his sufferings. 1. The first reflection will be "*ergo erravimus*." Oh! what a gross mistake have we made. Oh! what a most solemn and irreparable error is ours. What false ideas did we not entertain on earth. We thought ourselves very wise when we knew many natural sciences, when we

knew how to become rich and powerful : we made no account whatever of those devout faithful persons, who, though illiterate and deprived of every other prerogative, knew how to be saved.

A doctor of the university of Paris appeared to the bishop of that place, and told him with a lamentable voice that he was damned. The bishop asked him if there was any science in hell : the miserable man answered, that he only knew three things : 1. That he was eternally damned. 2. That the thundering sentence was irrevocable. 3. That for the pleasures of the world and the body he was eternally damned : then he asked the bishop, " If the world still existed ? " " Why ? " interrogated the bishop. " Because," added he, " during these days so many souls have fallen into hell, that I thought many more could not remain alive in the world."

The second reflection will be, " I deserve this pain, having offended an infinite majesty. I have often been admonished by priests of what has happened to me, and I could easily have foreseen it. God has given me every assistance to be saved, and I abused it, thus all the fault is mine. God became man that I might be saved ; he was crucified for me, and I for a very short pleasure have rendered the blood of God vain and useless for me." Ah ! these thoughts are so many nails, so many thunderbolts which transfix the mind of a damned soul. Above all, the intellect will be afflicted by the privation of the beatific vision, and by the experimental knowledge it has of the effects of Divine justice : the saying of Isaias is verified : " Lord, let thy hand be exalted,

and let them not see : let them see and be confounded."—(*Is.* 25.) How is it that the damned do not see God, yet do see him for their confusion ?

The angelic doctor distinguishes, (*Ap. qu.* 92, *ar.* 2.) between the intuitive vision by which the blessed alone see without veil the goodness of God, which vision constitutes their beatitude; and the abstractive vision, by means of enigmas, through which is had some faint glimpse of the Divine attributes. This second vision is granted also to the damned, so that knowing the effects of Divine justice, this knowledge will serve as their greater punishment. What a torment this will be to the understanding of the damned. God, who has been my creator, my father, and who ought to have been the object of my happiness, I have to recognise as the author of all my torments. Oh ! what punishment, what anguish. Finally, the will will be tormented by a thousand different affections : by contempt, rage, sadness, disgust : souls will envy in a sovereign degree those who are in the enjoyment of heaven, of whom they made so little account during life. The master who is damned will not bear to see his servant saved : the beggar, him of whom he was an enemy : he will wrap up hatred a thousand times in his heart, without once experiencing any sentiment of love, which attracts with its sweetness : he will hate God, as the author of his punishment : he will hate the saints, for approving of his torments ; he will hate and be indignant against himself, as the cause of his ruin : he will be indignant seeing himself a fuming victim in that fire which exalts the infinite justice of God,

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(*Apoc. xiv., 11.*) He will despair, finding he never can obtain anything he wishes, and he must always suffer against his will: he should wish to die and terminate his tortures, but cannot: he desires a drop of refreshment or a moment of quiet, and never will have it: he should wish not to see fierce devils before him, and will always see them. Oh God! what torments are these. The greatest of all the pains is that of the will: even the most excruciating punishment of hell is called the pain of damnation, by the privation of God, the sovereign good and last end of man. Ah! the most bitter necessity of never seeing God and of never loving him, is a torment which may be called infinite, because a separation or a division is so much the more painful, as the good which is lost is greater.

A hard thing is exile, for by it native country is lost; still more painful the confiscation of goods by which property is lost; more heartrending is the perpetual separation from parents and friends, as their endearing society is lost: a more keen loss is that of life. How bitter then must be to the damned the loss of God, who is an infinite good? Must it not be an infinite pain? So much the more, as a soul separated from the body adheres more violently to God, its last end, than the flame progresses to its sphere. What noise a fire enclosed in the earth makes to ascend to the heavens. It goes so far in mines as to crumble and precipitate rocks, and with earthquakes it even causes kingdoms to totter. Let us hence conclude with what force a soul separated from the body is impelled towards God, its end and

centre, and with what pain it is repulsed, and obliged to stay by force in the abyss? Ah! the unfortunate creature, weeping with tears of fire, is obliged to repeat: "This amiable God then, who created me, who loved me so much that he died for me, I am no longer to see. This beautiful Paradise then, made purposely for me, and for which I was created, I am never to enjoy. I am no longer to see Mary, the angels, or saints. O what anguish!"

Absalom, for his brother's murder, fell into disgrace with his father, and was exiled. At length, at the request of Joab the general, he returned home, but with the express compact never to appear before his father.—(2 *Reg.* xiv., 24.) He felt this punishment in so lively a manner, that not being longer able to bear it, he sent to entreat the king to admit him into his presence, or to kill him, esteeming it a less evil to die than to live in torment. What anguish then for a damned soul never to see that God who had been his most beloved father; on the contrary, always to recognise him as his enemy, and to see that it is he himself who with his breath blows his mantle of flames, and that he approves of his torments. "Dominus iridebit eos:" "The Lord will mock them."

Beloved, meditate this, and weep bitterly. This is a figure of the hell you have so long merited. Hell is greater than all that can be said of it. Go to the mouth of this horrible furnace, then exclaim: "Here I should find myself, if after having committed that mortal sin, God had not preserved me from sudden death." Ah! infinite mercy of God,

how much am I obliged to you. "A thousand times you might have damned me had you wished it," I shall say with St. Augustine. Do you also say: "Wretch that I am, I may be damned; innumerable souls similar to me were damned; many also who have committed less sins than I have. Judas was damned, who was an apostle. One who first had been a saint, and had wrought miracles, was damned. I at so great a risk live with so much liberty, and do not tremble from head to foot, and all the blood does not freeze in my veins."

Reflect, thirdly, that to find oneself damned is no unlikely thing: on the contrary, according to the general opinion of doctors, the number of those who are damned exceeds that of those who are saved. Oh! how terrible! The learned Bellarmine says: "If, of all mankind, one alone should be damned, this would be a just reason to induce every one to fear for himself, and to live well:" and with reason.

Arnulph, Count of Flanders, suffered from the stone. The physicians recommended him to undergo an operation. He, however, would not expose himself to the danger until an experiment should have been tried upon some other person; consequently, he caused all in his states who were similarly afflicted to submit to the surgeon's knife. Among twenty cases, nineteen succeeded, only one died; yet the death of this individual so frightened the count, that he refused to be operated on.

What should be our fear in the great affair of salvation, knowing that not one alone, but many are damned? "Ah! this is so tremendous a thunder-

bolt," says St. Augustine, "that he who is not aroused by its voice, and does not correct his vices, does not sleep, but is already dead."

In the last place, reflect how hideous a Christian must appear in hell, in the midst of a crowd of pagans, Turks, schismatics: what is still worse, to behold there a clerk, a priest, a prelate. To understand this, reflect that a soul, on entering hell, is immediately despoiled of all supernatural gifts, graces, and infused habits: there remains only the signs of those sacraments that impress a character, which causes greater confusion and torment. Infidels seeing in reprobate Christians characters of baptism, confirmation, and orders, will exclaim: "Ah! wicked wretches, you indeed have no excuse for perdition: you were regenerated to grace by baptism; you were strengthened by confirmation, sanctified by holy orders, yet you are damned: you are perfidious and ungrateful." In a similar manner, God will permit that persons should know each other: they will be pointed out, and it will be said: "Here are those who made profession of sanctity, who were more favoured and enlightened than others by God. Who would believe it, they also committed many irregularities, and are now under the feet of devils, and blended with the wicked of the earth. O what shame!" St. Augustine, with tears, bitterly lamented the misfortune of these souls.

COLLOQUY.

O great, omnipotent God, who have in your hands the keys of death and hell, how terrible you are to

your enemies ! how severe in your chastisements ; I admire sovereignly and exalt your infinite justice ! at the same time I do not cease being astonished at myself, how I dare offend a God who can destroy both my soul and body in hell. Ah ! blind and foolish that I was ; for so great audacity one hell is too little, I deserve a thousand : I am the person, and I say it with tears, who have little feared your justice, who have outraged your majesty, and who have abused your beneficence ; I am he who, as many times as I have sinned, have deserved hell, and as many times should have been precipitated into those flames, if your infinite mercy had not expected me to penance. Ah ! my good God, as through your goodness you have so many times delivered me from damnation, deign to deliver me from it for ever. "*Misericordiæ Domini, quia non sumus consumpti*:" "It is the mercy of the Lord that we have not been consumed." No, I cannot bear to think I shall not love nor be loved by you for all eternity : all the other pains of hell would afflict me much, but this pain of not seeing you, of not loving you, O my God ! my creator, my redeemer, my all ! Oh ! this pain indeed is insupportable ; so that if you wish to chastise me as I merit for my sins, chastise me here with sickness and persecution, but deliver me from hell : here burn, here cut, provided you spare me in eternity. I beg of you, through the bowels of your mercy, grant that the eternal fire may serve alone for Lucifer and his followers, for whom it was made : "*Qui paratus est diabolo, et angelis ejus*:" but for me and all your faithful, ex-

tinguish those flames with your Divine blood shed on the cross : “ Sed tu bonus fac benigne, ne perenni cremet igne : ” “ But do thou, the good, grant kindly that I burn not in endless fire.” Amen.

MEDITATION XIII.

On the eternity of the damned.

INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the greatest mistakes committed by worldlings is, that in affairs of the world, which are of very short duration, they employ all their solicitude : on the contrary, with regard to those which are eternal, they seldom or ever think of them. St. Eucharius, reflecting on this subject, knew not how to be silent. *Paren ad Valer.* If there be question of honour or interest, which like smoke shortly disappears, or of avoiding temporal evil, oh ! every exertion is then made : fatigue and expense are not spared ; but to acquire an eternal kingdom, or avoid an eternal hell, men are usually as dilatory as if it did not concern them : O what folly ! what blindness ! The saints who were enlightened by God did not act thus. Holy David acknowledged that he often tried to fall asleep at night, and certain fatal thoughts clouded his mind, and he sometimes passed days in sad and profound silence.—(*Ps.* vii., 5.) If you ask him the reason, his answer will be, because he often meditated and ruminated in mind

his future eternity.—(*Ps. lxxvii.*) Oh! what a grand thought. “*Magna cogitatio*,” says St. Augustine, (on *Ps. xxix.*) So powerful and efficacious a thought that it caused the blood to freeze in the veins of the greatest saints in the Church, and produced in them pains of martyrdom. The angel of the Apocalypse after having said that Babylon, that is perverse people, should be thrown into a sea of torments without hope of ever leaving it, adds, that this thought was the patience of the saints (*Apoc. xiv., 12*), which St. Thomas the angelic doctor explains: “*Consideratio enim pœnæ perpetuæ materia est sanctis patientiæ.*” Happy we, if this great thought be deeply imprinted in our minds: we would willingly suffer every temporal misery to avoid eternal evils. In this meditation we shall consider three properties, which accompany the eternity of the damned. 1. It is interminable. 2. Invariable. 3. Indivisible.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine God offers you two circles, without commencement or termination, one of massive gold, ornamented with palms and laurels, the other of red hot iron, transfixèd with a drawn sword and a terrible scourge; and that he says to you: “Choose which you please, but you must have one of these circles, either for your eternal happiness or eternal torment.”

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say to God with your whole heart: “Lord, if you will have satisfaction for my sins, puni-h me in

time, but not throughout eternity." "Hic ure, hic seca, hic nihil mihi parcas, ut in æternum parcas." "Here burn, here cut, here do not spare me, that you may spare me during eternity."

FIRST POINT.

The eternity of the damned is interminable.

We should consider many reasons why the pains of the damned are to be without end. 1. Because the decree passed by God is irrevocable. The blood of Jesus Christ will never attain to that abyss to satisfy for those miserable souls. 2. From Tertullian (*in Apel.*) The matter of their torments will be eternal; the devils being eternal, and the fire eternal, because preserved and provoked by the breath of a God who is eternal. Besides, the soul which is to suffer is also eternal; and sin, which is the cause of suffering, never being remitted in hell, is also eternal. The third reason is from the angelic St. Thomas (1, 2, *qu.* 87, *art.* 3.) Because the grievousness of the sin increases according to the quality of the person offended. The sinner having offended an infinite and eternal God, he has consequently merited an infinite chastisement, and an eternal torment. St. Augustine speaks similarly.

Finally, St. Thomas says (*loc. cit.*), that amongst the blessed and the reprobate there should be found an apposite correspondence. Of each it is said:—"Regnabit in sæcula sæculorum:" "He shall reign for ever and ever"—(*Apoc.* cxi., 15;) and of the former: "Ablata est lætitia et gaudium in sæcula sæculorum:" "Joy and gladness are taken away for

ever and ever.”—(*Apoc.* xiv., 10.) As the blessed have ever to exalt the eternal goodness of God, so the damned in their punishment have always to show the eternal justice of God. “*Ignis eorum non extinguetur* :” “Their fire shall not be extinguished.”—(*Isa.* lxvi., 24.) Thus the miserable damned have to suffer insufferable torments, which will never end. Never will God place the sword of his justice in its sheath for them.—(*Ezech.* xxi., 5.) Never will God show mercy to them. St. Bonaventure says: *Claudet eis viscera misericordiæ*: “He will shut the bowels of his mercy against them.” On the contrary, there is always to be in that abyss a death that never terminates, a succession of innumerable centuries which never end. “*Mors sine morte*,” says St. Gregory, (*l.* 9, *Mor. c.* 25,) “*finis sine fine* :” A death that shall never die, and an end that shall never end.” For ever and ever those inexorable doors are to be closed, without hope of their ever being opened for all eternity.

Great was the terror of Hugh of Pisa, Count of Gheadesca, when he was shut up in a deep tower with his children, and the keys of the prison were thrown into the Arno. Oh! how much greater will be the horror of a damned soul thrown into hell when those iron doors shall be closed on him, and he shall lose all hope of ever quitting it for all eternity. Oh! always. Oh! never. Oh! most terrible thunderbolts, capable of consuming every heart! The pain was certainly very great which the prophet Ezechiel sustained, when by order of God, to satisfy for the sins of Israel, he had to sleep on the left side for

three hundred and ninety days.—(*Ezech. iv.*) Oh! how incomparably greater is the pain of the damned, who has not to sleep but to suffer exquisite torture, not on a soft bed, but on burning coals, not for three or four hundred days, or years, or centuries, or millions of centuries, but for all centuries, always, eternally!

It is the property of eternity that if there be not union with the sovereign good and sovereign pleasure, it becomes most unhappy. Thus, if music were eternal, it would become an insupportable nuisance; if sleep were eternal, it would no longer be a restorative, but death. If then eternity be united with a slight evil, it becomes an infinite one. Thus, an eternal tooth-ache or suffering from the stone, being an infinite pain, a wise man should prefer to suffer for a thousand years all the torments of hell, rather than suffer a simple tooth-ache for all eternity. What then will eternity be in hell, where it is not united with a simple pleasure, not with a slight pain, but with most atrocious and inexplicable torments? What will it be?

The most miserable in the world console themselves, whatever misfortune occurs to them, by saying: "At least it will terminate with death." This harsh comfort the damned never will have, for their death will never end, of which St. Augustine said: "*Nulla pejor mors, quam ubi non moritur mors*:" "There is no worse death than when death does not die."—(*l. v. di. Dio. c. 81.*) Millions and millions of years will pass away, but eternity will still continue.

Father Baldigiani, a fervent missionary of the So-

ciety of Jesus, exorcising a possessed person in Rome, asked the devil how long he had been in hell. He answered: "Six thousand years." "Then console yourself," said the father, "that so many years have passed." "Wo to me," added the devil, "I should be consoled if these years were passed and were wanting."

This frightful and interminable eternity cannot be fully understood. It can only in a certain manner be explained, says the angelic doctor St. Thomas, (1 p. q. 10, art. 1,) by using comparisons. Imagine what will never occur, namely, that God should send an angel to the damned with this embassy: "Listen, miserable and wretched creatures: God, moved with compassion for you, has resolved to take you out of the fire of hell. Do you know when? After each of you has formed with his tears a collection of water more vast than the ocean, and after there shall have passed as many millions of years as there are grains of sand in the sea, leaves on the trees, and atoms in the air." O God, what a terrible annunciation! How incomprehensible the number of years to pass to fulfil these conditions! If the damned received this announcement, they would abound in joy, and consider it all as nothing; for, as St. Augustine says, (in *Ps. lx.* :) "Omnis res, quæ finem habet, brevis est." "Every thing that has an end is short." They would all rejoice, saying: It is true that in this case the years prescribed to suffer appear innumerable, but at last they will end, that suffices. But oh! such an embassy and such joy the unfortunate damned never will have. On the contrary, they will

be deafened with the thunder, and crushed beneath the wheel of a never-ending eternity. "Vox tonitru tui in rota."

Here meditate, O beloved: let us discourse together in confidence. Do you believe or disbelieve this eternity? You will answer: "I certainly believe it." I respond: "You believe it and sin with so much freedom, what could you do worse if you did not believe it?" "If then," says St. Augustine, "you believe it and sin, you must have lost your reason, or stupified your affections." O eternity! He who knows what eternity means, and continues to commit sin, has either lost faith or reason. Ah! I beg of you to think a little, says holy David—(*Ps. xlix., 22.*) O miserable worldlings, who live forgetful of God and your soul, you walk by long strides to perdition, and while you are running towards hell, you do not consider that when once arrived there, there is no road to return back. Every man goes himself, of his own accord, to the house of his eternity. "Man will go to the house of his eternity."—(*Eccl. xii.*) Having once arrived there, he never can depart from it. The house in which a person dwells in the world is not properly his own. A day will come when his dearest friends will have to chase him away to send him to be buried. Man's lasting house is that of eternity. Be careful then not to have one day to say, sobbing: "Ah! miserable that I am." "Infernus domus mea est:" "Hell is my house." Act as a wise merchant, and make up your accounts. Is it good traffic to enjoy the pleasures of a very short life, and to have afterwards to suffer most ex-

cruciating torments for all eternity? Thus spoke the great chancellor of England, Sir Thomas More, to Louisa his wife. He was confined in prison and condemned to the axe for the glorious cause of not consenting to the unlawful marriage of Henry VIII., when Louisa his consort appeared before him with her little children dressed in mourning, her hair dishevelled, sobbing, clapping her hands with all that energy which love, grief, interest, and jealousy gave her, she commenced saying: "Thomas, you could live long at the height of honour, and you prefer losing your head on a block, and leaving us heirs of your misfortune. Do you not remember my love which you did not merit? Have at least compassion on these poor children." Tears and fainting prevented her from continuing to speak. Thomas was moved to compassion; but animating himself, he asked: "Louisa, how many years do you think I should survive to enjoy my honours?" "How many years," said she, "you are of a vigorous constitution, regular in your manner of living; I think you may certainly promise yourself twenty years of life." More assuming a stern countenance: "Go, go," said he, "you are a very silly negociator. Does this appear good traffic—for twenty years of life, and these uncertain, to have afterwards to suffer an eternity of torments?" Ah! if every man would thus balance his accounts. How many years can I possibly live in this world? Twenty, fifty, one hundred years. Do not these pass like lightning, as a dream, and then eternity! eternity! How foolish a negotiation! for very brief enjoyment, which passes

like a dream, to deserve eternal torments, which never end, never, never, never !

SECOND POINT.

The eternity of the damned is invariable.

All the evils of life, especially if they are tedious, always have some alleviation or interruption. Even the habit of suffering accustoms, and, in a manner, deadens souls to suffering. Fevers have their decline; spasms and wounds are mitigated by sleep, and lulled by unctions. The miseries of Job were alleviated by the compassion of his friends. Usually God so disposes of events in this world, that pains which are insufferable, such as death, are short; and pains that are tedious, admit of mitigation. The evils and pains of hell, however, are not so, being excessive and eternal, without alleviation or interruption.

1. The painful eternity of the damned will be without alleviation, for, from whom can these unfortunate creatures have relief? From God? On the contrary, he will increase their torments —(*Sap. iv.*, 18.) “*Dominus iridebit illos.*”—(*Ps. ii.*, 4.) From the saints? No; they will enjoy seeing these victims burn to exalt the infinite justice of God.—(*Ps. lvii.*, 11.) From heaven? No; for St. Chrysologus says, the miserable creatures will be more afflicted by the sight of heaven, which they lost, than by the view of their present hell: “*Plus cœlo torquentur quam gehenna.*” Shall they have relief from companions? Oh! as a thorn splits another,

and a coal enkindles another, so the damned will tear and burn each other. The father will not forgive the son, nor the consort her spouse, nor the sister her brother, nor the companion or friend another friend.—(*Isa. ix.*, 19.) Shall they have any relief from themselves? Even this will not happen, as the damned soul resembles a tempestuous sea, agitated by a thousand irregular passions and a thousand contrary wills—(*Isa. lvii.*, 20 ;) so that the eternity of these unfortunate creatures will always be deprived of every alleviation.

2. It will be without interruption. Suffice it to say, the rich man could not obtain one moment of relief from his great thirst by a single drop of water, of which St. Augustine writes, (on *Psalm cv.*) And that the devils watch night and day to torment the damned.—(*Job xxx.*, 15.) Dragons and monsters, whose talons are such, that there is not any enchantment to restrain their fury.—(*Jer. vii.*) Finally, the fire is also most active and devouring.

Let us now discourse together. If even pleasures and the most congenial walks, if not varied, become intolerable, how tormenting will the pains of hell be, which for the whole length of eternity will not have one moment's interruption? This great thought caused a most pious king to excite one of his courtiers, whose conduct was irregular, to lead a more Christian life. This king, after having several times attempted to recall him, finally adopted this plan: One morning at a very early hour he invited him to a most formal but fatiguing hunt. After the chase he wished him to play for several hours. After

play a comedy followed. The courtier began respectfully to complain to the king that his favours were most acceptable to him, but too continual. The king pretended not to hear him, and immediately invited him to a dance; after the dance to a cavalcade, after the cavalcade to an academy of music. The youth not being longer able to accept of so many invitations, and finding his strength fail, threw himself at the feet of the king, saying: "Sire, I am overpowered, I can no longer stand upright. I beg of you to give me a little rest; already we have been walking for eighteen hours without one moment's relief." The king, then assuming a majestic air, said: "You cannot bear a walk of eighteen hours; and, after so depraved a life, how can you sustain continual and uninterrupted torments during the whole length of eternity?" At this severe reprimand the courtier entered into himself, reformed his manners, and led a holy life. Ah! if we also thought of this, how advantageous it would be for us in the reformation of our manners!

Finally, the eternity of the damned will be invariable. For all their wounds they will have no remedy—(*Sap. xi.*;) neither shall they have that bitter remedy of those in despair, namely, that of death. "Quærent mortem et non invenient:" "They shall seek death and shall not find it."—(*Apoc. ix.*, 6.) Besides, they cannot have any diminution in suffering by habit—as it were accustoming themselves to those sufferings, for they will always be most excruciating, and appear new. They cannot even change the place of their torments.

On earth, if a sick person is agitated by pains, change of position may occasion some relief, though the patient suffers in every place. Thus, at one time he walks, at another runs, or stretches himself on his couch, turns now on one side, now on another. Not so with the damned; ever immovable in his excruciating torture, he can never move from that situation; he never can stir from that place in which he falls for the first time. "If the tree falls to the south or to the north, in what place soever it falls there it shall remain." What terror! What dismay! O eternity, who can think of you without trembling? My soul, what do you say, think, or resolve?

St. John Climacus relates, that a profligate youth named Toribisco, after long fixing his thoughts on eternity, said to himself: "Toribisco, we have no other course "Aut inter stultos, aut inter sanctos:" "Either among the fools or among the saints." Either you do not believe or understand these things, and you are going to an asylum of madmen; or you believe and understand them, and are going to a hermitage to become a saint." Each should say to himself: "Oh! I do not reflect on this frightful eternity which faith teaches me; I am consequently the most foolish man in the world; or I do not reflect on it as I ought. What more then have I to wait for, but to change my life and become a saint?" Ah! my God, my most merciful Father, deign to have pity on my soul. By your sole goodness you are pleased to give me light to know eternity, give me also efficacious graces to lead such a life that I may

hereafter enjoy the eternity of the blessed, and not undergo the torments of the reprobate.

THIRD POINT.

The eternity of the damned is without division.

The better to understand this point it is necessary to suppose the definition which Boethius, (*lib. III.*,) gives of eternity: "*Æternitas est interminabilis vitæ tota simul, et perfecta possessio.*" It is a duration ever present; a perpetual to-day, without past or future. In this world evils are suffered successively. The evils of eternity appear to be all united; for miserable reprobate, knowing with certainty that his torments are to last for ever, and having no hope that they can ever end, at every moment is tormented by a whole eternity which overwhelms him, and which he apprehends in a lively manner and with horror. This is easily explained by a similitude. Imagine a great ball of bronze, perfectly round, placed on a flat surface. In this case the ball does not touch the surface but by one point of its sphere, yet its entire weight overwhelms it. Thus eternity, though it presses on the damned by one point alone, namely, by the present moment, yet it oppresses by its great weight the past, present, and future, uniting to torment, for the damned says unceasingly to himself: "All the years past, how numerous soever they have been, have not in the least point diminished eternity. The present moment is excruciating to me, and future pains are never, never to end." What agonizing torture, what a terrible thunder-

bolt to the mind of a damned soul—"Throughout eternity I cannot be saved! Never can I escape from this horrible prison."

The prophet Jonas, swallowed by a whale for his disobedience to God, finding himself inclosed in that fish as in a living prison, not knowing that in three days he was to be cast on the sea shore, began to sob inconsolably, saying: Ah! wretch that I am, always to live and die in this dungeon. "From the womb of hell here I criedthe bolts of the earth have shut me in for ever."—(*Jon. ii., 3.*) What Jonas said, being uncertain of obtaining his liberty, every damned soul will say with truth. "Ever and never are two keys of bronze which have inclosed me in this hell for ever. Here I am to suffer these flames for ever, those devils for eternity, this rage for ever." O eternity! most terrible eternity! Yet I have said little, for it will be not only one sole eternity which will afflict the damned, but so many tormenting eternities as there are moments of his hell, for at every instant he feels himself newly oppressed by the whole length of eternity. "In perpetuas æternitates:" "For endless eternities," says the Psalmist. Hence will arise in the damned that pain, which St. Cyprian says is worse than every other torment, namely, despair: "Omni tormento atrocious desperatio." The damned having lost all hope of obtaining mercy from God and having an end to his torments, with contemptuous rage will turn against God, and with cruelty towards himself will tear his own flesh. Here on earth, says

Venczio, (*lib.* III.): "Clausis ex desperatione crescit audacia, et cum spei nihil est, sumit arma formido." What then will be in hell?

Some enemies of the Israelites having taken refuge in a large cavern, so soon as Joshua knew it, he commanded that the entrance of the cavern should be closed with large stones, and posted there a company of brave soldiers to prevent the besieged from escaping.—(*Joshua* x., 18.) What despair, what dismay, for these miserable creatures, finding themselves in the fatal necessity of certainly dying of hunger, if they did not give themselves up to their enemies; or of being cruelly massacred if they surrendered? How much more miserable is the state of the damned, who cannot be rescued from pains even by death: on the contrary, they must suffer in defiance of themselves, that eternal imprisonment. What howling, what sobbing, what despair will be theirs! They will be constrained to repeat that of Jeremy, (iii., 9:) "Conclusit vias meas lapidibusquadris; dedit me in manu de qua non potero resurgere; et factus est dolor meus perpetuas et plaga mea desperabilis in æternum et ultra." "He has shut in my path with square stones: he has put me into a hand, out of which I cannot rescue myself, and my pain is made perpetual, and my sore is hopeless for ever and beyond it."

The same infinite justice of God cannot threaten a more terrible chastisement than the eternity of the damned: how does it happen, that many do not fear it? If human justice threaten imprisonment for a month, or the galleys for a year, terror is excited

and the most wicked men restrained. Divine justice threatens an eternal prison of flames, and there is no fear, no account made of it. "As for me," says St. Augustine, (in *Ps. xlix.*), "I am out of myself when I think of it. I cannot attribute it to anything else but to a want of faith."

The sinner most certainly knows that if he dies in mortal sin, he is immediately condemned to an eternity of torments; notwithstanding, for weeks and months he keeps away from confession: he even laughs, amuses himself, and sleeps tranquilly. O madness! Some have been found so blind, that even at the point of death they did not amend: to leave a rich inheritance to ungrateful heirs, they would not make the necessary restitution: in order to acquire a comfortable livelihood for their children, with their eyes open, they have chosen to precipitate themselves into eternal fire: certainly, so great folly appears incredible, yet it has often been seen in the world. To reduce persons to a reasonable sense of duty, what Lobezius writes is memorable, "*in via vitæ et mortis.*"

A father of the Society of Jesus was called to assist a dying person, who though of low condition, had, notwithstanding, amassed immense wealth by means of usury and other unjust gains. The father, with all the ardour of his zeal, exhorted him in the liveliest manner to make restitution, but all in vain; for the dying man never ceased to repeat, that he had not the heart to leave his wife and children poor: not knowing what to do, the father left his room, and meeting the doctor, begged of him instantaneously to adopt a holy stratagem; having agreed to the

request, the physician entered the sick man's apartment, saying as the father recommended: "Sir, your case is despaired of, neither can our remedies avail; but one expedient remains, which depends entirely on your wife and children:" the patient raised his head and began to breathe, and at once sent for his wife and children. The doctor then caused a lighted torch to be brought, and turning to the wife said: "Come, put your finger into this flame, and cause a drop of grease to fall into this vase; it will be a most powerful remedy for the life of your husband." At this speech she trembled exceedingly, and retired quickly. The doctor smiled at her flight, and said: "Ah! she is a timid woman, therefore worthy of compassion; but you, children, will you not, for the sake of your father, consent to burn one of your fingers, until merely one drop of grease falls from it?" Scarcely had they heard the request, than following the example of their mother, they also took to flight, and with them the doctor likewise. The confessor immediately entered, and with great zeal, said: "O God! Does it appear to you just, to leave your wife and children rich, who are not willing to burn one finger for you, and that you should go and burn eternally in hell?" At these words the dying man entered into himself, ordered the necessary restitutions to be made, and died with signs of Christian penance.

We should understand well that when there is question of eternity, no temporal thing should be considered. When Dathan and Abiron were swallowed up alive by the earth suddenly opening under their

feet, those who were present at this most fatal spectacle instantly took to flight, (*Numbers xvi.*, 34,) and in their flight cried out: "Let us quickly depart hence, that the earth may not also devour us." We have seen innumerable sinners thrown into the abyss, where they burn, and will burn eternally, in punishment of their sins: let us learn at the expense of others, and avoid those vices, which may also precipitate us into hell: let us fly from gambling, avarice, and all irregularities in our conduct. "*Fulgiamus ne et nos terra absorbeat:*" "Let us fly lest the earth swallow us also."

COLLOQUY.

Ah! my dear and affectionate Redeemer, now indeed I throw myself at your feet, more than ever astonished and conquered by the great thought of the eternity, with which you punish your enemies in hell. I wonder at myself, and I know not how to understand how I could have so much blindness and rashness, knowing by faith that so cruel a chastisement was reserved to sinners: yet I have sinned so many times, continually relapsing into great faults, like those impious creatures of whom David says: "*In circuitu impii ambulans.*"—(*Ps. xi.*, 9.) Ah! fool that I was! I confess, O my God, that you have too much reason to chastise with eternal punishments him who has dared to offend your eternal majesty. "*Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum:*" "Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is might." However, the just fear of your infinite justice should not destroy in me a filial confidence in your infinite

mercy. However unworthy and wicked I may be, I am yet the work of thy hands, and a creature redeemed by thy blood. "Tuus sum ego : saluum me fac : " "I am thine : save me." What! Will you cast into fire, and into eternal fire, a work formed by your omnipotence? Will you permit that the effusion of your precious blood should be useless for me? No, my God, your generous heart will never consent to it. "Numquid in æternum." I also weep with holy David. "Numquid in æternum projiciet Deus : " "Will God cast away for ever?" I certainly confide in your clemency that you will not do so, particularly as for this end you give me light to comprehend eternity in a lively manner, that with this thought I restrain my passions and do penance for my sins. Therefore, contrite and weeping, I embrace your sacred feet, all wounded and bleeding for the love of me. I beg of you to forgive me a thousand times, for the ingratitude I have shown towards your infinite goodness : and I firmly resolve with the penitent David : "Numquid in æternum projiciet Deus? ego dixi : nunc cœpi." I will now begin a new life. I wish in future always to love and serve you. I will never, never more displease you. Amen.

MEDITATION XIV.

On the Prodigal Son.

INTRODUCTION.

To induce an invalid to partake of the most bitter medicines, and dispose himself to be placed in the hands of the most cruel surgeons, nothing more is requisite than that he should know in a lively manner the grievousness of his sickness, and his great peril of losing life.

In order that a soul should be resolved on amendment of life, and doing penance for sins, no more is required than to know its miserable state and the great risk in which it is of being lost for all eternity. Seneca expressed the same.—(*Ep.* xxviii.)

The lively knowledge of her miseries caused Magdalen to form the resolution to fly from the world and run to the feet of Christ.

That great sinner, Thais, after being enclosed for three years in a rude cave, being asked how she could endure so great a change, answered: "By always keeping before me a balance, in which I placed a cup of all my former irregularities; these I endeavoured to counterpoise in another cup, by the greatest possible penance."

St. Ignatius, enlightened in a special manner to make known to the Exercitant what he has done wrong in the past, and the good he should do in future in order to attain his last end, and to avoid the punishment of a prevaricator from the same end,

shows him, as in a mirror, the mysterious parable of the Prodigal Son.

This was a profligate youth, who having abandoned his father, and given himself up as a prey to every vice, was reduced to the degrading condition of tending swine. Then repenting, he returned to his father, by whom he was received in the most welcome manner. All this is a symbol of what happens to a sinner in the commission of sin, and what he should do to atone for the evil by penance.

Let us then consider ourselves in this mirror. Liranus (on *Exodus xxx.*) mentions that several penitent Jewish women, repenting of their vanity, brought their mirrors to the temple to the hands of the priests. Moses took and set them in the interior a large shell of bronze, which was kept filled with water, in the tabernacle for the purification of the priests. Why so? St. Gregory explains it well: "Moses lined the lavatory with mirrors, in order to show that the knowledge of our sins exhibits to us our stains, and that seeing them we feel compunction, and so wash them with tears."—(*Hom. xvii. in Evang.*)

Let us then consider in the living mirror of the Prodigal Son: 1. His departure from the house of his father. 2. His return. 3. How affectionately he is welcomed by his father.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see in the centre of a public road, an aged patrician of grave aspect, and before him, thrown on the ground and embracing his feet, a pale

youth in tattered garments with dishevelled hair, and who in his misery appears to have a noble air and genteel mien : he weeps bitterly, and unceasingly asks pardon of the aged man. On the other side, the father is moved to compassion, and mingling his tears with those of his son, he embraces and presses him to his breast.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say to God : My most beloved Father, at your feet lies a prodigal, repentant son. I am too well acquainted with my faults ; I have no one to have recourse to for succour but you.

FIRST POINT.

The departure of the Prodigal Son from the house of his father.

The first part of the above-mentioned parable relates, that a father of a family, noble, rich, of great credit in his country, had two children whose characters were in direct opposition. The eldest was well-tempered, obedient to his father, applied to his studies, and from his wisdom afforded the best hope of being one day his worthy successor. The second, on the contrary, was ill-tempered, capricious, without application, fond of liberty and amusement : although his father furnished him abundantly with food, dress, attendants and every suitable diversion, yet as he frequently admonished him for his greater good, and gave him suitable advice, this was so displeasing to him, that the restraint exercised by his father appeared to him an insupportable yoke ; he then complained to other dissolute youths of the

same mind, who had no judgment. Thus they would ever answer him: "I am surprised you have so much patience with that old man; you are grown up, why not give you the management of a little money? You have a judgment of your own (and truly he had); you can well be your own guide. Act as we do: beg of your father to give you that portion of inheritance belonging to you; we will then guide, and we will cause it to fructify: thus, in a short time you will become a rich man." Oh! what evil arises from wicked companions! what ruin from bad counsel! At these words, the foolish man became excited, and at once throwing off the restraint of filial reverence, he presented himself to his father with an arrogant look and downcast eyes, saying: "Father, I am sorry to mention it, yet I cannot do less, for I can no longer remain in your house under so much subjection. I beg of you to give me my portion. 'Da mihi portionem substantiæ, quæ mihi contingit:' 'Give me the portion of substance that falls to my lot.'"—(*Luke xv.*) At this request the wretched father was almost out of his mind. "Son," said he, "what a strange resolution is this? What is wanting to you in my house? If I keep you in any subjection, are you not aware it is for your good? Ah! my son, do not kill me before my time." Thus speaking he burst into tears. The perfidious son, not being in the least moved by this spectacle, continued to repeat: "Da mihi portionem." His wretched father, no longer knowing what to do, collecting a quantity of money and jewels, with tears in his eyes he con-

signed them to him. Being in great joy for possessing so much wealth which he never had before, he immediately went off to his friends, who highly applauded him. In their company he went on a journey to distant countries. On arriving he gave himself up a prey to every vice, and consumed in a very short time whatever he had. Having dissipated his fortune, a great famine ensued, and not knowing how to live, he was forced from hunger to place himself in the service of a citizen, who sent him to one of his villas to take care of a herd of swine. In recompense he did not allow him as much bread as would suffice for his maintenance, only a small portion each day; so that the unfortunate youth to relieve his hunger was obliged to share acorns with the swine.

From this history we should reflect: 1. That it is a very expressive symbol of what happens to the sinner. Before his prevarication, in his first state of innocence, he was by grace the adoptive son of God, invested with supernatural habits, frequently nourished with the holy Eucharist. In the house of his celestial Father he enjoyed great repose of conscience, and he had a right to the inheritance of Paradise. But, oh! with increase of years his disordered wishes also increased for a free and licentious life. To this was also added the impulse of evil conversation, and the advice of perverse companions. What followed? He began to be annoyed with devotion, and a good life appeared to him too difficult, so that he commenced to turn away from God, to receive the divine Eucharist more rarely,

to avoid churches and oratories, to attend to plays and pastimes. Then passing from one vice to another, he arrived at so miserable a state of conscience, that, considering himself in the light of God at the holy period of Spiritual Exercises, he is forced to repeat: O what a thorny wood, what a den of serpents is my soul become!

This happened to a doctor in the time of St. Ignatius. At this time exercitants left the Spiritual Exercises modest, retired, devout, and quite changed from what they originally were. A report was spread in Rome that St. Ignatius assembled people in solitary and obscure places, and there showing them ghosts and horrible monsters, so frightened them that they remained almost stupefied and astounded. A doctor desirous of ascertaining the truth, commenced the Exercises. Scarcely had he completed them when his friends surrounded him, and thus interrogated him: "Is it true what has been said of ghosts and spectres? Have you seen any?" Ah!" said the doctor, "it is but too true. I, amongst others, have seen so frightful a monster, that I shudder at the very thought of it." "What!" replied the friends, "what was this monster?" "This monster," he added, "was my soul become so hideous and deformed on account of its sins, that it caused me to shudder."

Let us here stop to reflect. Consider yourself in the mirror of the prodigal son, and now see how different you are from the first years of your innocence: see how burthened your soul is, how full of sins and evil habits; see how you have become a

monster, and be confounded and humbled before God, saying to him, weeping: "Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo:" "Spare, O Lord, spare thy people." We have, besides, to consider what was principally the cause of so many evils in the prodigal son; namely, leaving the house of his father; therefore, St. Augustine goes to meet the traveller on his journey, and with words full of zeal, says to him: "What do you do?" "Abiisti, periisti." You have left your father? then you are lost. In losing him, you have lost your guide, counsellor, assistance. This is then the misfortune of one who withdraws from God: he loses every good, and incurs every evil; so that St. Augustine says, sighing, : "Quid habetis, si Deum non habetis?" "What have you if you have not God?" The good Celestial Father does not chase any one away from him, but only abandons those who abandon him, so says Trent, (*Sess. vi., c. 11* :) "Nunquam Deus deserit hominem, nisi prius ab homine deseratur." Unfortunate, however, is he who abandons God, and lives far from him. St. Augustine weeps bitterly, (*Confes. lib. ii., c. 2*,) and cannot cease reflecting on the weighty evils of his youth, for he then lived far from God, and fled from the Creator to follow creatures. The misfortunes of the exiled prodigal son are reduced principally to three: 1. He dissipated all his goods. 2. He had to endure hard slavery. 3. He was reduced to employ himself in taking care of swine.

To these misfortunes correspond in proportion the miseries of a sinner who abandons God. 1. By

sinning, he loses in one instant the goods of the soul, sanctifying grace, the friendship of God, supernatural gifts, the right to glory, the merit of all good works previously performed. 2. He becomes servant and slave of the devil, who seizes on him more than on a possessed person, for the devil only possesses the body of a possessed person, and the sinner is possessed in his soul. 3. Finally, that life which he could employ in the acquisition of eternal treasures for the soul, he entirely employs in satisfying his senses with the most vile pleasures of this world, by an irregular and almost epicurean life. O misfortune! O misery of a sinner who is far from God! Who can explain it, and who can lament it as much as it deserves?

Open then the eyes of your soul, and if by chance you have abandoned God, walking in the way of iniquity, return to your Celestial Father: thus did the celebrated James, named Intercisus. Isdegerdes, king of Persia, had a special favourite, named James: being much displeased, that he who was so dear to his heart and according to his taste, differed from him in religion, James being a Christian, he adopted so many means, by promises, favours, and threats, that finally the constancy of James was shaken—the king caused him to renounce his faith: scarcely had his mother and his wife been acquainted with his fall, than these noble ladies, who were most faithful to God, immediately wrote to him these words full of holy resentment: “James, we now abandon you, as you have abandoned God. We depart from your house as you have departed from the faith; nor

shall we ever return, if you do not return to the true religion." James no sooner began to read this letter than immediately floods of tears flowed from his eyes; being strongly transfixed with the thorns of cruel remorse, he went with intrepidity to the king, and with superhuman courage. "King," said he, "by depriving me of faith, you have taken away my God. I wish to have him again, cost what it may, even my life." The enraged barbarian loads him with bitter reproaches, and immediately condemns him to be cut to pieces. "I willingly accept it," answered James: and seeing his flesh torn with a knife, "Cut," said he to the executioner, "cut and take away my life, with as many torments as you please: may I lose all rather than lose my God." Oh! how beautiful an example of holy and Christian prudence. What will it avail me to have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, if I have not God? Far from God there is no good which is real; thus, if I, as the prodigal son, have departed from him, I wish anew to return to his feet and to his love.

SECOND POINT.

Return of the prodigal son.

The prodigal son reduced to a most unhappy state of life, finally taught by his own miseries, entered into himself. As sufferings cause reflection, ("Vexatio dat intellectum,") he began thus to reason with himself: "I am reduced for my too great wish for liberty. Ah! had I remained attached to my father! Those dissolute companions, how wickedly did they

deal with me : so long as I had money about me, they all surrounded me, then, then when I fell into poverty they turned their backs on me : these are worldly friends." He then began to think of the passed conveniences which he enjoyed in the paternal house, where the domestics had as much bread as others : reflecting on his hunger, nakedness, and present misfortunes, and thinking of the best means to repair hereafter so many evils, his mind must have been disturbed, and his thoughts confused. Considering he could not act a better part than return to his father, he had many interior combats to sustain. "How then," said he within himself, "can you dare appear before your father, whom you have so much despised? What will he say, seeing you in this miserable condition, barefooted and in rags? At least, he will say : 'Go, I do not recognise you as my son ; go and seek for those friends who made you tread under foot the tears of a father already advanced in years.' Will he not even turn me out with his staff, or order his servants to throw me down stairs." These fatal fancies served to dismay him ; finally overcoming himself : "Come," said he : "fatal necessity obliges me ; he is a father ; I will go ; if he will not admit me as a son, I will entreat of him to receive me as his servant : he is a father, that suffices ; I will go : " *Surgam et ibo ad patrem meum.*"

This "I will arise," of the prodigal son, is the practical fruit, which is principally intended to be drawn from the Exercises : namely, that he who has meditated the eternal maxims, should make a strong

resolution to adopt a good life, if his former life were wicked ; or a better life, if the preceding were good : without this resolution, all besides would be useless : for this purpose, St. Ignatius did not call these weeks of Spiritual Meditation, but of Spiritual Exercises : for it would avail little to meditate eternal maxims, even with compunction and fervour, if afterwards the exercitant did not proceed to the practice of what he had been meditating. This is to be done by imitating the "surgam" of the prodigal son, in the manner in which he executed it. A resolute act of the will is wanting, and this depends on us.

If a person desire to be rich, or noble, he will not become either by wishing it, for it does not depend on him : but, if he really wish to be a saint, he will become one, for this depends on his will, with the concurrence of Divine grace, said St. Augustine. It is necessary, however, that this will should be resolute and strong, and not a simple inclination, which expresses the will by words, not by deeds : this St. Augustine acknowledges of himself : at the commencement, previous to his giving himself entirely to God, it appeared that he himself willed and willed not. "Ego eram qui volebam et ego qui nolebam : " "I it was who wished, and I, who wished not." It is necessary besides, that the will should be prompt to execute : so soon as the prodigal son had said, "surgam," without delay he went towards his country. Oh ! how many who wished to become hermits, burn now in hell, solely from having deferred from day to day the execution of their resolutions,

without ever carrying them into effect ! Among these may be ranked Otho III., emperor, of whom we read in the life of St. Romuald, written by St. Peter Damian. Otho having committed two grievous faults, namely, taking away the life of Crescenzo, a Roman gentleman, and his wife, St. Romuald several times urged him with great zeal to do penance in a religious cloister. Otho always answered in the affirmative, but that he would do so hereafter ; flattering himself that in the interval he would, with imperial magnificence, erect a temple in honour of St. Adelbert ; finally, turning from Pavia to Ravenna, he there visited the saint, who stimulated him in a still more anxious manner not to defer the penance he had resolved on, adding, that death was not so far from him as he thought. Otho paused, then said : " Come, I wish to go to Rome with my army, to subdue the pride of the Romans ; returning thence victorious, I will overcome myself, and maintain the promise I made to God by changing this imperial mantle, and putting on the religious habit." Romuald smiled, saying : " Ah ! if you go to Rome, you will not return to Ravenna." So it happened ; for having arrived at Rome, and given himself up to greater irregularities, he died suddenly of poison, with great signs of reprobation.

Oh ! how many, I again repeat, who wished to become hermits, weep in hell for having put off their conversion. St. Augustine having resolved to change his life and give himself to God, deferred its execution from day to day : finally, he thus encouraged himself : " When shall I finish saying, to-

morrow, to-morrow?" This is deceiving God, and betraying one's own conscience. Where is the invalid, who, if he can be cured by taking a remedy to-day, should wait for to-morrow? Having it in my power to be disburdened of my iniquities, why wait for a later period? Ah! beloved, meditate well on this point: consider that God in these Exercises enlightens you in so lovely a manner, and gives you a fervent will; if you do not now execute Divine inspirations, how is it possible to do so after these Exercises, when your mind will be less enlightened, and your first fervour cooled? Who knows if God, in punishment of your want of correspondence will give you another call: or if he do, who knows whether he will give you that more efficacious grace which will secure your correspondence? Take courage then, and say with the returning prodigal in a resolute manner: "I will arise and go to my father:" thus did St. Galgan, hermit. When in the world, he was a famous swordsman, who thought of everything but his salvation: once as he was walking alone out of the city walls, he heard an interior voice saying to him: "Galgan, why do you not become a saint?" Galgan stopped for a few moments, then suddenly said to himself: "Come, I will be a saint." Without returning to his house, providing for his interests, or taking leave of his friends, as he was, he went towards the mountains, and there having chosen the darkest and the most rugged cavern, one which he thought best adapted for his sanctification, he remained there: not finding an image of Jesus Christ, before which

he could pray, and not knowing what other method to adopt, he unsheathed the sword which accidentally hung to his side, and fixed it by the point in a stone ; then before the cross of his sword he commenced such prayers and penances, that not having survived longer than a year, he became a saint, and is now venerated on our altars. In the city of Sienna in Tuscany, his head is preserved incorrupted and perfectly entire, so much so, that it appears alive to those who view it. His decision was a real, strong, and quick resolution ; his was a true will, necessary to become a saint. We should not be dismayed, nor would we diffide, just as the prodigal son was not discouraged, but trusted to obtain his father's pardon. We should not diffide, on account of our grievous sins ; for how great soever they may be, Divine mercy is always infinitely greater. God is ready to grant to all the assistance of Divine grace, to lead that new and more holy life to which we feel ourselves inspired, and which we shall not be able to practise by our own strength. With the Divine assistance the good thief and Magdalen became saints, so can we also : thus St. Augustine animated himself. We should not diffide with regard to God ; as a physician likes to show his skill in curing a grievous infirmity, so God displays his power and clemency in forgiving the most wicked sinners. God graciously accepts the confidence of those who give him an opportunity of exalting his glory. Christ did not call even the apostles by the tender name of sons ; two he did so call who had recourse to him with greater confidence in their

grievous misfortunes, namely, the paralytic, of whom it is written—"Jesus seeing his faith, said, have confidence, son : " and the woman who suffered from hemorrhage, to whom our Lord said : " Have confidence, daughter, thy faith hath saved thee." Let us therefore take courage, and placing our whole confidence in God, undertake a holy life. "I will arise, and go to my father." To animate us still more, let us reflect on the relation of the Disciple (*Prompt. Ex. V. Miseric*). A most wicked man who with his own hand murdered his father and brother, fled from Divine and human justice, when fortunately one day during Lent, he heard a sermon on the Divine mercy, in which he heard explained that passage of *Ezekiel* xviii. : " If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed living, he shall live and shall not die." He was so excited to compunction, that he ran to the feet of a confessor, and with most bitter tears told his sins. The zealous confessor absolved him, and obliged him to go to an altar of an image of the most dolorous Virgin, who had Jesus crucified in her arms, and there to continue to weep and implore the mercy of Jesus and Mary of the dolours : he did so with so vehement and lively contrition, that his heart was rent asunder—he fell suddenly dead at the foot of the altar. The following day, as the same priest recommended the soul of the deceased to the prayers of the people, a white dove appeared in the church, holding in his mouth a small paper ; after making several turns he let it fall at the feet of the priest, who taking it up, on

opening it, found these words written : " The soul of the deceased had scarcely left the body when it was carried by angels into heaven. Do you continue to preach the infinite mercy of God." Oh ! how good is our God ! How loving ! Certainly he does him great wrong who does not confide in him, much more than the prodigal confided in his father,

THIRD POINT,

The prodigal son is received most affectionately by his father.

The prodigal having returned to his father, immediately set off for his own country : having arrived there, so soon as he was in view of the paternal house, he began to tremble from head to foot from fear, blushing with shame, revolving gloomy thoughts, Oh ! what will my father say ? What will he do, seeing me in these rags ? How can I appear before him, after having acted as I did ?" Pensive and sad he paced slowly along, when fortunately, the father, who was at home, saw him appear from afar : not having heard from him for so long a time, to see him, to know him, and be excited to a tender compassion towards him, were all the same : as it were, out of himself from joy, he did not walk, but ran, with open arms to the prodigal son, who finding that his father, instead of reprehending and punishing him, received him with so much love, throwing himself on the ground and embracing his father's feet, shedding torrents of tears, began this beautiful confession : " Ah ! my father, I have offended you too much, I know it well ; however, I am not come

to you to consider me as a son, certainly I do not deserve it. I will be contented to be treated as one of your hired servants." The father seeing his son humbled and repentant, commenced also to weep from tenderness, pressed him to his bosom with a most sweet embrace. The first expression of his love, as St. Jerome reflects, was to embrace those lips whence issued so beautiful a confession of his faults. "Son," said he, "I forgive you, and that you may be convinced of it, I beg of you to receive this pledge:" thus speaking, he takes a rich ring off his finger, and puts it on that of his son, crying out to the servants to procure quickly from the wardrobe, the most beautiful garment to decorate this ragged child; "hasten to prepare from him a sumptuous banquet; kill the best calf amongst the flock, that the poor son may be consoled after so many hardships; the most joyful music shall resound at table." Thus speaking, he takes him by the hand, and conducts him home, with testimonies of so much kindness, that he caused envy in the elder brother, who was angry that his father manifested affection for a profligate son, which he had never shown to him, who had always been obedient; insomuch that the aged father with sweet words was forced to hush his lamentations.

Meditate attentively, that this father of the prodigal was benignant and merciful; but oh! how much more affectionate and merciful is our good Celestial Father—"our Father who art in Heaven!" The father of the prodigal son received him as repentant, but we do not read of any exertion being

made to recall him: he did not send a servant, or a messenger to know where he was, he did not adopt any means to recall him to himself; whereas, what does not our God do to convert sinners? He expects them to penance, he calls them, entices them, runs after them in the most passionate manner to gain them to his sheepfold.

Own it, beloved, what has not God done for you to become a saint? Has he not enlightened your mind? How many inspirations, invitations, how many calls by means of confessors, preachers, good books? How many times have you not felt that God required from you a more Christian and holy life? If you have not yielded, it was an effect of your insurmountable obstinacy. Oh! what a good God! what a good Father we have!

Finally, if our Celestial Father sees at his feet a converted sinner, were he even the most wicked in the world, oh! what pleasure does he not feel! What a feast! He enjoys it much more than a shepherd does the finding of his dearest sheep that was lost in the forest, and he calls all the angels to congratulate with him in Paradise. Whether he be the most wicked creature on earth—an adulterous David, or a disobedient Jonas, a persecutor Saul, a usurer Zachens, an assassin Dismas—it is of no consequence, provided he be truly contrite: that deformity, the mere mention of which excites horror in men, does not produce that effect in God. To resuscitate Lazarus, who was four days in the grave, he did not disdain to look at his dead body, already rotten and fustid, insomuch that his sister could not look at it.

He even holds his arms open to receive all those who turn to his love. It was not then without mystery that the Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget, that while enveloping the dead body of Jesus in the holy sepulchre, whatever exertion was made, his extended arms could not be united. He wished thereby to show that his arms were always open to embrace contrite sinners ; and so much the more, as his mercy as father, is ever united with the earnest intercession of Mary, who is mother of sinners. When the prodigal returned home, he found the father, not the mother ; what should he have experienced had he also found the mother, who would intercede and weep for him with his father. This advantage of which the prodigal was deprived, we possess if we be converted to God. Our Celestial Father is most inclined to use mercy towards us, and with his loving designs are united the powerful prayers of our great mother Mary, who is likewise pleased to be called the Mother of Mercy. What confidence then should we not conceive of obtaining pardon of our sins from such a father, and through such a mother ? The prodigal son not only received from his father a most gracious pardon, but also more special demonstrations of tender love than ever did his elder brother. Our God not only absolves the penitent sinner, but places him again in his friendship, invests him with supernatural favours, admits him once more to the eucharistic banquet, and if he continue to correspond with the assistance of his grace, he enriches him with most singular favours of sanctity, as if he had always continued in innocence. What favours did not our

Lord grant to Mary Magdalen! He became the panegyrist of her love. "Dilexit multum:" "She loved much." What graces were conferred on Margaret of Crotona? He called her *his* sinner and his net to entice other souls; and so of a thousand other penitents.

It is written of a Roman senator, named Rufus, that having committed a most grievous fault, he finally obtained pardon from Julius Cæsar; scarcely had he obtained it, than he at once tried to obtain from him some special favour in confirmation of the pardon granted to him; for, said he: "O Cæsar, no one will believe that you have really pardoned me, if you do not confirm the grace of pardon by the favour of some new benefit."

Our most benign father, God, after having remitted the sins of the penitent sinner, even without having been requested, confirms his love more and more towards him by the expression of the most sincere friendship, namely, by many new benefits. O infinite charity! O clemency without comparison! O inexpressible beneficence! If it be so, why should we longer delay in hastening, together with the Prodigal Son, to the feet of our divine Heavenly Father? Let us go, for he will receive us much better than the evangelical father received his rebellious son; he will even console us much more than St. John Chrysostom consoled his persecutors. This great doctor and Bishop of Constantinople, after being unjustly persecuted by the Emperor Arcadius and the Empress Eudoxia, was finally sent into exile, where he died most holily. After

his death Theodosius the younger, son of Arcadius and Eudoxia, wishing to satisfy for the faults of his parents, caused the body of the saint to be brought from exile to the city. Theodosius having arrived at the church of SS. Peter and Paul, deposed his imperial mantle in the view of an immense concourse of persons, threw himself on the venerable bier, and weeping most bitterly, exclaimed with a loud voice: "Pardon, O holy father and pastor, the sins of my mother." The people cried out in the same manner weeping: "Pardon, O holy father and pastor, pardon the wrongs which we have done you; pardon the insults we have offered you." As it were by divine instinct, having taken the holy body out of the bier, they placed it on the bishop's seat invested with the sacerdotal garments, as if he had been their living prelate: being all on their knees before him, they continued to weep and ask pardon. The holy father, appeased by so many signs of true repentance for the evil committed, casting his eyes joyfully around on the people, pronounced these words in a clear tone of voice: "Pax vobis, Pax vobis:" "Peace be with you, Peace be with you." —(*Baron. t. V., an. Chr. 438.*) Let us also throw ourselves at the feet of our good father and good pastor, Jesus, whom we have so much outraged by so many years of a disorderly life, let us weep before him: let us ask pardon a thousand times for our faults; he will certainly be moved to compassion, and not only will forgive us, but he will confer on us a thousand other favours, interior peace of soul, and eternal peace in Paradise.

COLLOQUY.

Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. Ah! my heavenly Father, "Pater noster qui es in cœlis!" too frequently have I hitherto offended you. I well know it, and as I am enlightened to see it, I should wish to weep over my sins incessantly. Ungrateful as I have been to your love, I have corresponded to your benefits with outrages. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." If as often as I have offended you, my Creator, I had offended a vile creature, he would persecute me to death. If as often as I turned my back on you, my Father, a son had acted in the same manner towards his terrestrial father, he would have been disinherited and chased away; and you, O my God, instead of striking me with thunder a thousand times, as I have deserved, have expected me to penance, and you now await me with open arms. Oh! most amorous heart of Jesus Christ, how benign and beneficent you are! I would also wish to say, with the prodigal son, that you should no longer receive me as a son, as I am unworthy of it, and only receive me as a servant. "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants." But no, I will not thus wrong your infinite mercy. Son I shall be, although most unworthy of that name from you, my heavenly Father, and if for the past I have not acted as a son, yet you have always been a merciful father to me: "*Ego perdidi quod erat filii, ille quod patris est non amisit*:" "I have lost what was a son's. He has not lost what is a father's." I also say,

with Chrysologus, (*S. se Præd*). : Now, then, do not chase me away from you, “*Me projicias me a facie tua :*” “Cast me not away from thy face,” but accept these tears and this penance, receive me with your paternal benignity, absolve me from all past faults, and grant me grace never more to be separated from you : “*Ne permittas me separari a te :*” “Suffer me not to be separated from thee.” Grant that in life, I may always be your adoptive child by grace, and that after death, I may enter into possession of your eternal glory. Amen.

MEDITATION XV.

On the two standards.

INTRODUCTION.

THE present meditation is directed to establish still more the strong resolution already made, to arise with the Prodigal Son to a better life : it is entirely formed by St. Ignatius, according to his military ideas : after having been a captain in the earthly militia, he became the glorious leader of the Company of Jesus. To understand its system, it is necessary to suppose that this world, if well considered, is nothing more than a field of battle. “The life of man is a warfare on earth—(*Job vii., 1*)—for every man has continually to combat with the attractions of the world, with rebellious passions, and with the devil’s tempters. As every soldier should be enrolled under the standard of a captain,

it is necessary that the same should be observed in the spiritual warfare, where there are two captains, Jesus Christ and Lucifer: it is necessary that all should take a part, either with the one or the other. There are some who would wish to serve both: to attend a little to piety and devotion, and a little to amusements—to be a gambler. Lucifer not being a true or a just captain, but an unjust tyrant, would be contented with this division: as before the throne of Solomon the pretended mother condescended to the division of the child, saying: “Let it neither be mine nor thine, but let it be divided.”—(3 Kings ii., 6.) Jesus Christ, who is our true and legitimate king and captain, is not contented with it; on the contrary, he protests clearly in his Gospel that no one can serve two masters: he appears as if he would wish to say to certain persons wavering and inclining sometimes to the side of God and sometimes to that of the demon; what Elias said with great zeal to the Jewish people: “How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”—(3 Kings xviii., 21.)

Choose then according to your pleasure what pleases you most, either to serve God, or to serve the devil and the world.

To make a just and holy election in this case, we shall consider in this meditation: 1. Which are the conditions and rewards of those who follow the standard of Christ. 2. Which are the conditions and rewards of him who follows the standard of Lucifer. 3. The election which should be made of the standard of Jesus Christ.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see on a beautiful mountain the captain Jesus, holding in his hand a white banner, on which are written in characters of gold, these words: "Short the suffering, eternal the reward." With a pleasing and amiable countenance he animates his disciples to go over the world to make a levy of persons for his standard. On the contrary, imagine you see in a horrible cavern, Lucifer seated on a throne of flames and smoke, holding for a sceptre a formidable trident, and mounting a black banner, on which are written in characters of fire, these words: "Short the enjoyment, eternal the suffering." He is surrounded with innumerable demons, and he excites them all to go over the world to enrol followers to his standard.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say: "Ah! my most sweet captain Jesus, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." The reason for so doing, will be, because: "Thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only art most high, Jesus Christ,"

FIRST POINT.

What are the conditions and the rewards of those who follow the standard of Jesus Christ.

1. We should consider what Jesus Christ requires from his followers. He being our captain, our king, and our master. he might exact our services by right of justice; but he does not wish for soldiers by

force; he wishes to be served "with a great heart and a willing mind." "Qui vult venire post me, &c.:" "He who *wishes* to come after me, &c."—(*Luc. xi.*, 23.) He who will follow me, let him do so: he who does not desire it let him act according to his fancy. Our Lord is not as the captains of this world, who will not admit all to the militia, but select the younger, strongest, and tallest. Our Lord admits all, old and young; sick or healthy; rich or poor: they are also to have their motto and arms: their coat of arms will be a more modest and composed deportment, and their armour will be that of incorruptible justice, the shield of faith, the helmet of Christian virtues, and the sword of the Divine word.—(*Ephes. vi.*, 14.)

This Divine captain wishes that his followers should suffer in this life, but what description of sufferings? Does he wish that they should live in deserts or in cloisters—that they should wear hair-shirts—that they should fast on bread and water? No, this is not required. To those who spontaneously wish to make use of such austerities for his love, God gives immeasurable rewards in heaven; but he does not require so much from them: on the contrary, he allows the wealthy to enjoy their riches lawfully; the nobility to act according to the decorum of their state; to all he permits the moderate use of those delights which he created in the world for the benefit of mankind. What then does he require? "Abneget semetipsum, tollet crucem suam et sequatur me:" "Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." 1. That he deny

himself : he is still to retain human nature, but he should repress those ill bred passions which he has within him of pride, avarice, incontinence, and similar ones, which would cause him to live not as a man, but as an animal.

2. He wills him patiently to carry his cross ; but, what cross? Perhaps that of St. Peter, or of St. Andrew, which was so bloody and cruel? No ; but the cross of those labours which the Lord usually sends to every one for his greater good : thus, the good thief was saved, though his cross was not more tormenting than that of the bad thief. Why then did he pass from his cross to heaven, while the bad thief was precipitated from his cross into hell? The former suffered his pain with resignation, saying : " We indeed suffer justly, but this man, what evil hath he done?" The latter suffered his torture with blasphemy.

3. Finally, our Lord wills, that man should follow the example of his charity, humility, mildness, and other virtues. " Sequatur me : " " Let him follow me ; " since it is right that the soldier should follow the steps of his captain, and that the man who leads a wise and virtuous life, and thus confers advantage on others, should receive advantages in turn.

For how long does God wish that his followers should suffer such pains? For a very short time, namely, for that of this life, which for all is short : " Breves dies hominis : " " The days of man are short," and for the greater part of mankind is very short ; for many more die in childhood and youth than in old age.

These are the conditions and the laws which the good captain Jesus imposes. Are they not most discreet, reasonable, and just? Who can deny it? Besides, this most benign Lord does not wait to give all the recompense for such sufferings in the other world, he also gives a portion in this life: he acts more nobly than earthly captains: he gives his soldiers copious assistance whilst they combat, and rich rewards after having obtained the victory of their salvation. What are these rewards?

1. Great peace of conscience. Oh! what contentment to be enabled to say: "I am in the grace of God: if I die I shall be saved." Solomon says (*Proverbs* xv., 16): "A secure mind is like a continual feast." This is an interior good which cannot be taken from us by any person: riches, dignities, lands can be taken from us by robbers, enemies, and those in power; but who can take peace of soul from us? No person. Jesus Christ says: "Your joy no man can take from you."

2. Spiritual consolations which God gives to the just: a little paradise which mitigates all their pains: these internal delights were, with reason, styled by St. John (*Apoc.* ii., 17), "the hidden manna which no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it." St. Bernard, though leading a most severe kind of life, asserted, that all he suffered for God appeared to him sweeter than honey. St. Augustine weeping at the foot of the crucifix for his former faults, declared, that he experienced much greater pleasure in weeping for God, than he did formerly in frequenting the theatre.

3. The assistance of Divine grace which anticipates, accompanies, and strengthens the just man to act uprightly : thus, the same happens to him as to a little child, who could not alone form one letter ; but if the master hold his hand, will soon write well. Do not then fear, God says to his followers, for I will act in the same manner with you (*Isaias* xli., 13) : " I am the Lord thy God, who take thee by the hand. Fear not, I have helped thee."

4. The example of the captain Jesus, who first of all fulfils the laws of charity, patience, and humility, which he prescribes to his soldiers. What comfort, what great courage the combatant receives to see his captain always precede him to encounter the conflict.

The Maccabees having come in sight of their enemies, beholding a rapid torrent impede their progress, lost courage ; then Simon, their captain, boldly entered the first into the waters and passed them swimming, immediately all his troops courageously followed. (*1 Maccab.* xvi., 6.)

Such then are the stipends, the assistance, the graces and the delights that the captain Jesus gives his followers during life : how much greater are the rewards which he gives them in the other life ? He gives them after a short suffering an eternal reward : then he will say to them : " O my soldiers, who have so well suffered the labours and the fatigues of my campaign, come and triumph with me eternally in heaven." According to the measure of your pains will be the measure of your rewards ; but im-

measurably greater : each of you is always to be more happy, more rich and more powerful than any earthly king, and to possess a much more extensive kingdom, and one without comparison more noble than any kingdom in the world.

The seraphic St. Francis appeared once in a vision to a servant of God. "Know," said he, "that if God created another world beyond comparison better than this, insomuch, that the mountains were made of diamonds, the country of emerald, the seas of silver, the rivers of balsam, all this fine world could not equal the kingdom which any one of the blessed possesses above." What fine premiums then, and what rich recompenses our Lord grants to his faithful soldiers !

Here meditate, beloved, how great are the advantages of a follower of Christ—what great emoluments. If to acquire a terrestrial kingdom it would be necessary to lead during twenty years a good and holy life, oh ! how many would become saints through ambition to reign ! God promises an eternal kingdom in Paradise, and will we have as little self-love as not to care to gain it. In a militia in which God himself deigns to be captain, shall we be slow in following ? What a shame it would be for us, and how delicate and cowardly should we appear if we excused ourselves from walking in the royal way of the holy cross, by means of which God himself did not disdain to walk. What an injury we offer to God if, while he erects the standard of the cross and invites us to follow him, we should turn our backs and leave him alone to suffer ?

Plutarch writes of Sulla, that combating with Archelaus, conductor of the army of Mithridates in Bœotia, he was assailed in a marshy place, and his Roman soldiers not being able to square themselves advantageously, took to a precipitate flight. Sulla sought by prayers and threats to arrest them; all being in vain, he took a standard from one of the ensigns, saying: "Romans—Romans, unworthy of such a name, do you also fly? I will remain here firm until my arm loses its strength, and my sword its sharpness, to defend the honour of this ensign. Go and save yourselves; but should you be asked where you leave your leader, say that you leave him alone to defend the Roman standard against an army. Do you wish for another?" The soldiers confused with these words, returned to the field and won a signal victory. Ah! Christians, the captain Jesus seems to say: "Know that I remain firm in defending the standard of the cross: if you do not wish to follow me as you should, at least remember you leave a God alone to suffer for you, while you will not suffer anything for yourselves." Reflect if it be right, while your captain is contented with being humble, poor, and covered with wounds, you, most vile servants, will always be proud and self-interested. How bitter soever these reprehensions of Jesus may be, yet they are most just.

Ah! my Divine captain, how sweet, loving, and kind you are! Not to be attracted by your most amiable qualities, we should either be devoid of sense or affection.

SECOND POINT.

What are the conditions and the rewards of those who follow the standard of Lucifer.

Lucifer is not a just captain, but a perfidious tyrant, who has usurped the power of enlisting people against God. He promises his followers what is written on his standard, "Short enjoyment—eternal suffering." He exhibits plays, dances, theatres, banquets, and gives full vent to the most unrestrained passions, so that hereafter they can say: "Let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth."—(*Wisdom xx.*) This, however, is for the very short time of life, and no more: thus, the felicity of the impious appears, as St. Augustine says, "a happiness similar to glass, which breaks, although it shines, and dissolves into powder." It is a semblance of good; like to the rainbow which after it has displayed its deceitful colours for a moment, vanishes and disappears. It is a dream of enjoyment, which as it quickly ends, increases the pain of its loss. This is all the advantage of him who follows Satan and the world. Oh! how this brief and apparent advantage is poisoned by innumerable evils! for the devil granting terrestrial pleasures to his soldiers, gives them a dolorous stipend of pains in life, and for reward, eternal torments after death.

1. The brief enjoyment of worldlings is to be embittered by cruel remorse of conscience, which continually accuses the sinner, and reminds him,

that to die and to be damned, are for him synonymous. As one in a fever, or with a thorn in his foot, were he at a concert, banquet, or theatre, could not enjoy them, so he who feels he is in disgrace with God, whatever pleasure may be afforded him, he never can fully enjoy it. Miserable Cain, having committed the great crime of murdering his brother Abel, wandered through the country, fearing to be also murdered by whoever he should meet. From whom could he dread death, if no one lived at that time, but Adam his father and Eve his mother? This is the terror which sin brings along with it.

2. The brief enjoyment of worldlings is ever accompanied by labours and heartbreakings. Plentiful banquets occasion sickness and excess: gambling produces rage and despair: luxurious vanities expend beyond one's income: military honours are succeeded by wounds and toil: the dignities of courts cause envy, rancour, rivalry, irregularity, shortness of life: the acquisition of riches never indemnifies their miserable pursuers. How much solicitude—how much anxiety have worldlings for brief enjoyments? How much do they suffer, even in this world? They have to undergo in a manner, what Jonathan suffered to assail his enemies, the Philistines, who were encamped and restrained by rocks, surrounded by sharp stones: "And Johathan went up creeping on his hands and feet."—(1 *Kings* xiv., 13.)

The followers of the world do not obtain riches, honours, or any other terrestrial felicity without great labour and most bitter remorse: thus Jere-

mias said : "They have laboured to commit iniquity."—(ix., 5.) Those wicked men in Wisdom confessed : "We have walked through hard ways."—(v., 7.)

3. Lucifer does not trouble himself to give any assistance to his followers to observe the laws of the world. If Jesus Christ command the accomplishment of his law, he assists the faithful by his grace. Not so with Lucifer : he commands the nobleman to propose or accept a duel ; but he does not give him courage and valour to conquer ; he commands pomp and luxury ; but should a person have but little fortune, he, however, does not increase it : he commands revenge and ill manners ; but should a person remain impoverished, confiscated, or be murdered by giving way to these degrading passions, it does not in the least concern him : he appears to say, as the Pharisees did to Judas, who, aware of his excess, confessed having committed a perfidious act, saying : "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us ? look thou to it."—(*Matt.* xxvii., 4.)

Finally, the follower of Lucifer and the world, even in this life, often receives no reward : not unfrequently, most fatal slaughter is the recompense. The servants of God, even whilst alive, have a hundred-fold of consolations ; not so those of the demon, who often do not obtain any. Soldiers for the most part die in war, without having obtained that rank to which they aspired by combating. Courtiers for the greater part, after many years of service, do

not attain the post they ambition. Merchants, after much traffic, are not enriched: generally, men at the close of life, are obliged to confess that the world "is vanity and a great misery."—(*Ecclesiastes* vi., 2.)

This is the least that happens to the followers of Lucifer; it is far worse, after labouring much for him, not finally to receive any other reward but an unfortunate death; for, in general, warriors die by the sword; the ambitious die in despair; the avaricious die much chagrined, being obliged to leave their acquisitions to those to whom they are averse; courtiers die victims of their capricious sovereigns. Of all this history bears testimony; continual experience proves it. What Herodotus relates, (*book viii.*) is worth every other attestation.

Xerxes fled by sea from Greece to Asia, when he was overtaken by an impetuous storm—all the effects in the vessel were cast over board—the passengers were on the point of being drowned. Xerxes, being dismayed, asked the pilot if there were chances of being saved: the pilot with a sigh said, there was no other resource but to ease the ship of the crowd of passengers. "*Victorum multitudine levaretur navis.*" These passengers were the first nobles of Persia, and the king turning to them said: "Now is the time to show your love for your prince. I cannot be saved, but by your shipwreck." Oh! what a sad announcement! Xerxes had scarcely finished speaking, when immediately these noble courtiers, one after the other, making a profound inclination, threw themselves into the sea, never more

to rise. The ship being thus disencumbered, Xerxes arrived safely in Asia. On the landing of the king, he wished to recompense the pilot for what he had done ; but, extraordinary to relate, he first ordered him to be presented with a golden crown for having saved the king's life ; then immediately commanded him to be beheaded for having caused the death of the flower of the Persian nobility.

How much matter for reflection in this instance ! What was the recompense which the world gave these miserable courtiers, after so many years of service ? To be drowned in the sea, in homage of its sovereign ! What was the reward of that unhappy pilot, after having saved the life of a king ? To leave his head under an axe ! Oh ! how many similar fatal examples have been, and continue amongst men. Lucifer is a tyrant, the world is perfidious : their followers are ill requited during life. What rewards are given them after death ? Eternal sufferings : the sole recompense the impious receive in the other life, to each of whom will happen what occurred to the rich man, who, during life feasted sumptuously every day, attired in purple and fine linen, enjoying human pleasures as much as he could, when he was hurled to the lowest abyss of hell to burn for ever. Oh ! what a cruel captain is Lucifer ! How unfortunate are those who follow his standard ! How barbarous are the stipends they have in this life—what fatal recompense after death.

THIRD POINT.

The election which should be made of the standard of Jesus Christ.

Even supposing the conditions of following Christ were not so advantageous as they are, who doubts that we should also follow his standard through the strictest justice? At the same time that he deigns to become our captain, he is also our Creator, our Redeemer, our Preserver, and our whole good. For us he becomes light to the blind: "*Ego sum lux mundi*:" "I am the light of the world:" food to the simple: "*Caro mea vere est libus*:" "My flesh is meat indeed:" drink to the thirsty: "*Sanguis meus vere est potus*:" "My blood is drink indeed:" pastor to the strayed: "*Ego sum pastor bonus*:" "I am the good shepherd:" master to the ignorant: "*Magister vester unus est Christus*:" "You have but one master who is Christ:" nurse to his children: "*Ego nutricius: ad ubera portamini*:" "I am your nurse: you are carried at the breasts:" defender in conflicts: "*Inimicus ero inimicus vestris*:" "I shall be an enemy to your enemies:" physician to the infirm: "*Sanabo contritiones vestras*:" "I shall heal your bruises," guide in tempests: "*Venti et mare obedient ei*:" "Wind and sea obey him," and briefly, to comprise all, he is the whole good of all: "*Omnibus omnia*:" "All to all." Consequently, even though the following of Christ were most austere, and that of Lucifer most agreeable, yet because of the many titles which bind us to Christ, we should be called upon to follow him with all our strength, through justice, gratitude, and duty. How

much more then should we follow him, his yoke and his laws being so sweet and so mild, the conditions he requires from his soldiers so discreet, the assistance of his grace so copious, and the rewards of his glory superexcellent? At the invitation of so worthy and loving a captain, it might be anticipated that all persons in the world should surround him, and on the contrary, that none should enlist under the standard of Lucifer, who is not a less impious than cruel tyrant; yet, O confusion of Christians, O shame of Christianity, it is not so. St. John Chrysostom, reflecting on it, was in great astonishment, and trembled with zeal. "Vocat diabolus et congregat multitudinem; vocat Christus et non est qui audiat:" "The devil calls and he collects a multitude; Christ calls and there is none to listen." The devil calls to risk life in a duel, and all hasten. Jesus Christ calls to a slight mortification, and no one listens to him. The devil calls to exchange in a game goods and conscience, and there is a headlong rush. Jesus Christ calls to a church or an oratory, and no one attends. For a foolish interest there is no labour, how great soever, which does not appear trivial to men; whereas, every inconvenience is too great to obtain some merit for the soul: even the apostles, when fishing to procure gain was in question, joyfully watched entire nights; "We have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing."—(*Luke v., 5.*) Afterwards, when there was question of accompanying Jesus in the garden, they could not watch one hour: "Could you not watch one hour with me?"—(*Matt. xxvi., 40.*)

O Jesus, what bad success you have with men! or rather what folly is that of men, who being able to follow Jesus by a plain and agreeable way, and then attain Heaven, prefer following Lucifer by a severe and thorny road, to be thence precipitated into hell! "Qui cum posset per viam planam et deliciosam ire ad cœlestem gloriam, elegit potius, per spinas et saxa tendere in Gehennam."—(*St. Thomas of Villanova.*)

Reflect, O beloved, on the years of your past life, during which you were deaf to the divine calls, and turned your back to follow the standard of Satan. How great was your folly. Tell me then, confidently, how much bitterness and anxiety the short pleasures of the world cost? Compare the time in which you lived in the grace of God, and that in which you lived separated from him, and own the truth. When were you more happy and contented—when your conscience enjoyed peace with God, or when, far from God, you gave way to irregular caprice?

St. Augustine having first enjoyed the pleasures of the world, then the delights of the soul, acknowledges: "Hoc tantum scio quod male mihi est præter te, non solum extra me, sed in me ipso:" "This only do I know, that without thee it is ill, with me, not alone outside me, but within my own self."—(*Medit. i., 8.*)

This is the difference between following Christ and Satan: the following of Christ, according to appearances, is severe and difficult; the following of Satan appears delicious, but in substance is most bitter. Our Lord tells us not to judge of a good

life from the first appearance, but to make a trial of it: "Taste, and see that the Lord is sweet." Observe all the true servants of God: you will see them all joyful and contented, from the interior delights which God grants them. You will not find it so with the wicked, who continually lament and sigh, saying: "*Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis*:" "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity."—(*Wisdom* v., 7.) Then, my soul, why delay longer to take your resolution? Come then, tread under foot the standard of Lucifer, and run to embrace the standard of Jesus Christ: say to him with all your heart: Ah! my Divine captain, you alone do I wish to follow, for you alone deserve it: for you I am ready to spend my life, and shed all my blood.

We must admonish whoever has declared himself a soldier of Christ, that he should, 1. Wear his livery and colours; these are, a more devout and modest deportment. 2. He should follow Jesus closely, by the perfect imitation of his virtues, and not act like St. Peter on one occasion, who followed him afar off, and perhaps on this account denied him. Finally, he should follow him constantly, without ever abandoning him, and not resemble the disciples of the Lord, who in time of his greatest want, namely, at his crucifixion, all abandoned him. In this manner, innumerable heroic souls have followed the captain Jesus, in the course of so many centuries, of every sex, state, and condition: amongst these were five sons of the king of Scotland, destined one after the other to wear the diadem of their father, the king, who all successively renounced it to become soldiers

of Christ, and imitators of his poverty and humility. The first, who was already duke, having abandoned the state, left the kingdom, and in the habit of a poor pilgrim went to visit the holy places. The second, who enjoyed a large county, departed unknown to live in a hermitage. The third, who was elevated to the dignity of archbishop, having renounced the mitre, took the religious habit among the Cistercians. The fourth son was named Alexander, who remained with his sister Matilda. Alexander, at the age of sixteen years, was admitted by his father the king to a share in the government; when Matilda, a youthful princess of great sense and piety, having called him to a secret cabinet, said: "My dear brother, what are we doing? our brothers have renounced a kingdom the better to follow Christ, and shall we remain in the world to follow vanity? For my part, I cannot admit that they should reign more gloriously in Heaven than we. What are we doing?" "I will do what you wish," answered Alexander; each then by common consent resolved to disguise themselves as pilgrims the following morning, and without taking leave of their parents, to quit the palace and the city, and proceed to France, which they effected. Having arrived at a remote country, they stopped at the rustic cottage of a herdsman, where Alexander with heroic humility began to make cheese; subsequently he requested to be admitted, first as a domestic, then as a lay brother in a Cistercian monastery. Matilda retired to a small hermitage, a short distance from the monastery: their sole consolation was occasion-

ally to see each other, and converse on celestial topics; but Matilda soon petitioned her brother to make together the last holocaust of their affections to God, and never more to see each other in this world. Alexander almost fainted through grief at this proposition, yet he agreed to it, Matilda having retired to a villa named Lapione, lived and died a great saint.

Saint Alexander also lived to edify: shortly before his death he was obliged by his abbot (who interrogated him by particular inspiration from God,) to acknowledge that he was son to the king of Scotland, brother of three princes, and of the princess Matilda. After this admission, his holy soul, as if to flee human glory, which might thence result, left the body, which was held in veneration. Shortly after a Cistercian monk, having had recourse to him, was cured of an extensive swelling on his chest: Alexander appeared to him more luminous than the sun, with two most precious crowns, one in his hand, the other on his head, and said: "Know that the crown I hold is a reward for the regal crown I left for God; the other on my head is the one usually bestowed on all the blessed: as a sign that this vision is not mere fancy, but real, know that already you are cured." Having thus spoken, he disappeared; the monk was completely re-established in health.—(*Thomas Cantipratanno, ord Præd., l. ii., apum., c. x., par. 34.*)

Take courage, then, my soul, to follow the captain Jesus, and give a general refusal to all worldly pleasures which the enemy offers: be confounded,

not to attempt what princes effected in the flower of their age amidst the delights of a court.

COLLOQUY.

Most sweet and amiable captain Jesus, here I am at your feet ; I consecrate myself to you as your faithful soldier, although most unworthy of such a name. I embrace most intimately your holy standard, and with all my heart, I thank you for the infinite goodness with which you deign to invite me, and to admit me to your suite. Oh ! how advantageous is it not for me to follow you ! No ; I should not spend much time in deliberating on this, which, in itself, would be doing you an injury. At the same time that you become my Captain, you are my Creator, my Father, and my King ; and is it necessary for your creature, your son, and your vassal, to deliberate upon whether he would follow you ? I, therefore, trample under foot the impious standard of Lucifer : if, for the past, I have adhered to him, as doubtless I have, I now detest my error ; and if I could, I would efface it with my blood. Ah ! my Jesus : “*Ne memineris iniquitatem nostrarum antiquarum :*” “Remember not our iniquities of old :” and I know that henceforth I will be entirely yours. I wish, also, to follow you, carrying the cross by the way of humility and patience by which you walk : “*Sequemur, Domine, te :*” “We shall follow thee, O Lord.” I also say with St. Bernard, (*Ser. 2, de Assumpt.*) : For thee, to thee ; for thou art the way, the truth, and the life : the way in example—the truth in promise—life in reward. I

beg, therefore. your grace, so that having followed your standard here on earth, I may afterwards triumph in heaven: "Deduc me," concludes St. Augustine, "ad te finem meum, nec patiaris me inter hujus mundi nugas peregrinari, qui creasti me Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te:" "Conduct me to thee my end, nor suffer me to wander mid the vanities of this world a stranger; because, O Lord, thou hast created me for thee, and my heart is restless until it finds rest in thee." Amen.

MEDITATION XVI.

On the Incarnation and Nativity of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION.

PLINY strongly complains of Nature for doing a great injury to man, by causing him to be born unarmed and void of defence, while all beasts enter into life well supplied: eagles are armed with claws, lions with tusks, tigers with fangs, horses with feet to kick; man alone enters the world naked, unarmed, and unfurnished with any defence. I do not mean to say that Pliny's lamentations were just, knowing that man being provided with reason, becomes so versed in the art of war, that he restrains every wild beast, how ferocious and cruel soever. I only observe, that if this were true of other men, of Jesus at his nativity not only is it untrue, but on the contrary, he comes into the world surrounded with a thousand darts of love to wound the hardened hearts

of men:—(*Ps.* xlv.) He appears a lively dart of charity, issuing from the bosom of the eternal Father; and vibrating on this earth—(*Is.* xl.;) so numerous are the most amiable attractions of his goodness, and so great the incomparable benefits with which he enriches the whole human race:

In our meditation then on the incarnation and nativity of Jesus Christ, we shall omit for the present all reflections on the other Divine attributes; which shine so eminently in this mystery: we shall only consider the great charity of God; so particularly manifested in it to awaken in our cold breasts some sparks of grateful love towards him who has so much loved us. As the three clearest signs of love are to act, to suffer, and to benefit, let us first consider how much Jesus Christ has done in his Incarnation and nativity for the love of man. Second, how much he has suffered in his Incarnation and nativity for the love of man. Third, how much in his Incarnation and Nativity he has benefited man.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine we see the little infant Jesus lying in a cave on a heap of straw, surrounded by an ass and an ox. Mary and Joseph adore him on their knees as God: with their whole souls they do not cease admiring and considering him. Let us imagine that he extends his little hands towards us, asks for the gift of our hearts, saying: "Son, give me thy heart."

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say with holy David: "I love thee, my God, my fortitude, my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer. My dear Jesus, I place myself at your feet with the holy shepherds; I bring you the gift of my poor heart, which will certainly be much better in your hands than in my breast.

FIRST POINT.

How much has Jesus done in his Incarnation and Birth for the love of man.

Love resembles fire, which can never be idle; the beloved is ever occupied in doing as much as possible for the object beloved. What has not God done for man in his Incarnation and birth? By an effort of his omnipotence, he has united his divine, infinite, eternal nature to weak, miserable human nature, with so strict a tie of hypostatic union, that whatever action one should perform, should also be attributed to the other; hence God should become man, and man should become God. This is so exalted a work, that Habacuc, with a prophetic spirit foreseeing it, spoke as one astounded (i. 5): "Behold ye among the nations and see: wonder and be astonished, for a work is done in your days which no man will believe when it shall be told." This was a work truly of God, which should be called "his work." God then has done for man much more than the work of his creation, in which he has given him so noble a soul and so well organized a body. For his love he created heaven, the planets,

the elements, and a variety of creatures in the world, and created goods; but in his incarnation and birth what did he give him? His Divine being himself: this is the greatest effort of God towards man. Is not human gratitude aroused by so obliging traits on the part of God? If, after so many benefits, man is not grateful, it cannot be said he is asleep, but already dead, as this is the most intimate manner in which Divine goodness could communicate itself to creatures. God has already communicated himself to man, by giving him a being, with all the intrinsic gifts of health, riches, and honours, which accompany it: he had communicated himself by means of grace, enriching him with supernatural lights: he had communicated himself by means of glory, elevating him to enjoy his Divinity unveiled in Heaven. The last way of communicating himself by personal union remained, by which he would give to man, not goods distinct from himself, but his own person, substantially united to human nature. His infinite love effected this by means of the Incarnation: thus, no other means remained for immense goodness to diffuse itself to man. What more intimate communication can be imagined than that I should give my person to you, so that you may be changed into me, and I into you?—that God may be man and man God. O most astonishing instance of Divine charity! O inscrutable mysteries of Divine providence! This great communication, this great wonder God did for man and not for angel. Each of these beings had committed the same fault, of foolishly aspiring to the Divinity. Lucifer said:

"I will ascend into Heaven, I will be like the Most High."—(*Isa. xiv.*) Adam sinned in the terrestrial Paradise, being flattered with the promise made him: "You shall be as God."—(*Genesis iii., 5.*)

Lucifer was a most noble spirit and worthy of every consideration. Adam, on the contrary, was a most vile creature, kneaded from the earth; yet God willed to do for vile man what he never did for a noble angel: he not only did not give the divinity to a noble angel but he despoiled him of the grace which he had first given him: he not only restored miserable man to lost grace, but also gave him personal union with the Word. What partiality of ardent love is that, which God shows in his Incarnation, doing for us what he never did for the most sublime spirits of heaven.

Let us add, finally, that the Lord, by becoming incarnate and being born for man, honoured and favoured the whole human race; but by deferring his incarnation and birth to the age of the New Testament, he has granted us a privilege over those who lived under the Old Law. And yet there were then many virtuous and heroic souls who ardently sighed to see the future Messiah. There were especially the patriarchs and prophets, who sighed from their ardent desire to see the new-born Messiah? Turning towards the Heavens, they begged he might be sent as a refreshing dew: again they cried to the earth, that it might open and bnd forth a Saviour. Holy king David continually said: "Show thy face, and we shall be saved."—(*Psa. lxxix., 8.*) The holy lawgiver Moses repeated: "Show me thy face, that

womb, or exposed to suffer the inconveniences of infantine age; but he preferred suffering all that other children undergo. Why so? To prove the greatness of his love by the extent of his suffering; he would be conceived in the womb of Mary, and remain a prisoner there for the space of nine months. to satisfy the debts of Divine justice which the world had contracted. All other children remain in the maternal womb without sense, not having the use of reason; not knowing the miserable state they are in, they cannot complain; but God made man, enclosed in the womb of Mary, not only knew his miseries, but was infinite wisdom; he was also obliged to be closed in an obscure place, as in a portable sepulchre, more as one dead than alive. The prophet explains it for him. "I am become as a man without help, free among the dead."—(*Ps. lxxxvii.*, 5.) Oh! how great was this pain! what an insupportable torment! He could then have appeared on the earth, with every species of convenience and delight, yet he did not wish it. Why so? To show man by his sufferings how much he loved him; therefore, he would be born in the midst of winter, when the country is black with frost; die in spring, when the world rejoices, and is in all its beauty: all to denote that he did not require anything more from the world, but labours and pains for the love of man. He also so disposed of matters, that at the time of his birth, all the subjects of the Roman empire should be enrolled, by order of Augustus. So great was the number of those who came to be enrolled at Bethlehem, that lodgings

could not be procured by Mary and Joseph, notwithstanding their exertions, amongst their relatives and friends, or even in the public hotels. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Thus the most blessed Virgin was obliged to give birth to her Divine Son in a frozen cave, exposed to the winds of the country, and the hard frosts in December. The infant Jesus was of a most delicate complexion: it is said of him: "For behold the stone that I have laid before Jesus; upon one stone there are seven eyes."—(*Zachar.* iii., 9.)

Jesus could not have better accommodation from Mary, than to be enveloped in swathing bands, laid on the ground on a little straw, with a hard stone as a pillow for his tender head: an ox and an ass had here taken shelter, and having approached the holy child, warmed its delicate members; while from the stones in the grotto, as Bede relates, a fountain of limpid waters issued; at the same time the little child wept, and watched night and day, continually repeating, ah! ah! as if to express, according to the remark of St. Bernard: "Souls, souls, I weep, I suffer, and lament for your love." Mary, on hearing these lamentations, felt her heart torn with compassion, and Joseph moved to tenderness. What could be done to console him in so disagreeable an abode? Mary often took him up in her arms, and pressing him to her heart, refreshed him with milk. Joseph, taking off his mantle, gave it to him as a covering and defence. Who can imagine a more deserving object of compassion and admiration? Who does not feel his heart inflamed to love a God, who suffered so

much for love us? If he whom we see so lately lodged in the stable at Bethlehem, were a strange child, not belonging to us, even a most humble child, the son of a herdsman, humanity would teach us to compassionate and to love him; how much more, then, should we do, he being our God, Redeemer, only Son of the Eternal Father, who came purposely into the world to save us?

The daughter of Pharaoh had no sooner seen the infant Moses on the point of drowning, on the waters of the Nile, and heard his tender lamentations from the midst of the bulrushes, where he was enclosed, than, instantly moved by compassion and love, she saved him from those waters, and preserved his life, though he was of the Jewish nation, which was greatly hated by her father.

How much more compassion and love should we not have for the child Jesus, trembling with cold in a stable, he being our most amiable and beloved God? We should also correspond to the law of Jesus, by suffering something for him, who suffers so much for us. Our Lord at his very birth teaches us by his example patience, enduring cold, nakedness, and most bitter sufferings; and we advance in years and strength, and do not know how to profit by his lessons, nor to practise for his sake some corporal mortification. In our adversities, let us raise our eyes to Jesus in the manger, and say with holy David: "Thou art my patience, O Lord; my hope, O Lord, from my youth."—(*Ps. lxx., 5.*) I should not complain in my labours, as your great endurance obliges me also to become patient. If

we cannot attempt to imitate Jesus Christ, by suffering great pains, let us at least endure for him little contradictions, unkind words or actions, and similar things. Let us imagine that our Lord says to us these words of St. Augustine, on the fourth psalm : "Support little things if you are truly faithful, and elect wheat for heaven."

St. John of God, travelling from Gibraltar to Granada, met on the road a child of most beautiful aspect, badly clothed, walking barefoot on the frosty path ; the charitable saint, moved to tenderness at the sight, not knowing what else to do, said ; "Dear child, get on my back ; I will willingly carry you :" then, placing himself on his knees and bowing his head, having amorously embraced him, he made him ascend, and continued his journey ; but he soon began to feel the weight so great, that it seemed to him he bore not a child but a huge rock, and, oppressed by the burden he began to perspire copiously, and the child with an amiable countenance, began to wipe away the large drops with his hands. When they had gone a considerable way, and John could proceed no farther, he asked the child to come down, that he might go to a neighbouring fountain to refresh himself and acquire new strength, and the child consented, and John placed him on an ascent near the road, and went to the fountain, when suddenly he heard a voice saying : "John, John :" turning round, he no longer saw a poor, shivering child ; but one luminous, as brilliant as the sun, having a most beautiful pomegranate in his hand, at the top of which was a cross : he heard

him utter: "John of God, in Granada, there is your cross." Having thus spoken he disappeared. The saint knew it was Jesus, and he encouraged himself to bear that cross in Granada, which our Lord destined for him, in the care of the hospital.—(*In Vit.* viii.) What the infant Jesus said to St. John of God, exhorting him to bear his cross with patience, he appears to say to us, according to St. Ambrose: "Take up thy cross and follow me."—(*B.* viii., in *Luke.*)

THIRD POINT.

How much Jesus in his incarnation and nativity benefited man.

It often happens to the sincerest lovers, that though they do and suffer much for the person loved, yet they do not succeed in benefiting him in any way, the various accidents of human life, impede them and frustrate their designs. With Jesus that could not be the case, for he is a God of infinite power. When, therefore, he did so much for man in his Incarnation and birth, he also conferred upon him great benefits; a few of which we shall consider.

1. The Divine Word become man has brought all spiritual goods to the soul: he destroyed original sin; and as Origen reflects (*Hom.* xxviii., in *Luc.*), begotten from eternity by the Eternal Father, he wished afterwards to be temporally begotten in the bosom of Mary, in order that man, born by the fault of Adam, a son of wrath and damnation, should be again born spiritually to grace, becoming the adoptive child of God. By his coming into the world, he has opened to mankind the gates of Paradise, which

for so many centuries had been closed, even to the holiest patriarchs and the most virtuous persons of the ancient Testament. He extinguished the thunderbolts of Divine justice, by which God showed himself so terrible in chastising the people in the ancient law; he has changed those thunderbolts into showers of graces and benedictions: "*Fulgura in pluviam fecit.*"—(*Ps. cxxxiv., 7.*) He made more clear signs of his Divine goodness and mercy appear in the world. Are not these most singular, incomparable, inexpressible benefits? What more? He satisfied Divine justice for the sins of the whole world, taking on himself the punishments due to men, who were sinners: he degraded himself even to be born in a stable, to satisfy for human pride: he was pleased to be covered with rags, for our extravagance and indelicacy of dress: he wished to be wrapped in swathing bands for our too great freedom of manners: he willed to be born among beasts for the faults of those who act like beasts without reason: he took on himself poverty, nakedness, cold, and all the inconveniences of an abandoned grotto, for the intemperance of those who attend to nothing else, but the enjoying of all earthly pleasures, even such as are unlawful. Is not this infinite love shown to us by our God?

It is related of Maurice, Duke of Saxony, when at war with the Turks, in 1542: Once this spirited youth left his camp with only one page, to attack a body of the enemy. In the attack his horse was killed, and he himself falling on the ground, was exposed to the weapons of the Turks: then the page

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laid himself down on the body of his sovereign, and received upon his own person all the wounds of the barbarians, until other soldiers arrived and saved the life of the duke. The page having been conveyed to the tent all deluged in blood, soon after died. This was certainly great love, which induced the faithful page to take upon himself the wounds and death due to his master. How much greater is the charity of God, our supreme master, who took on himself human miseries to free us, most vile slaves, from miseries and eternal death? Our Lord wished specially to be born in Bethlehem, and appear as an amiable child, thus to animate sinners to come to his feet with more courage, there with more facility to grant them pardon of their faults. It is usual for children to hush their cries and allay their anger for the small gift of an apple or any similar thing. The infant Jesus remits the wicked all their delinquencies, if coming to his feet they shed a tear of contrition, or offer him the small gift of tender affection.

John Taulerus (*Ser. v., in Matt.*) says, that God, who conceived so much anger for an apple eaten by Adam, is calmed in Bethlehem, and dispenses immense benefits to whoever offers him the smallest tribute of devotion.

An extraordinary fact is related of John Guarino, a celebrated hermit of Mont Ferrate; he lived about the year 860 in so penitential a manner, and in so great credit of sanctity, that Richilda, daughter of Godfrey, Count of Barcelona, applied to him to be delivered from evil spirits; John cured her immediately: but afterwards blinded by passion, took

away her honour, and then her life. Being converted after such enormous excesses, he undertook great penances, and began to live like a beast of the fields, walking on his hands and feet in the fields, and nourishing himself solely with the herbs, which he tore off with his teeth in the fields: after seven years he was taken by huntsmen for a savage, or rather as a monster than a man, and was conducted into court to the count, who, with his courtiers, looked at him with amazement, when, O prodigy! a child of three months old, son of Godfrey, being in the arms of his nurse, his tongue was loosened, and he said in a clear voice: "Arise, John, for God has already pardoned you." The wise Godfrey thus recognised John, and having heard his crimes from himself, answered: "God forbid I should punish a penitent, whom Heaven itself has declared forgiven by so evident a miracle."—(*Villega ii., par Flas SS. et alii.*) This fact appears a lively image of what occurred to man at the birth of Christ.

Man was guilty of original sin, therefore he was hated by God as his enemy; he was besides, by perverse manners, become very similar to the brutes, not acting according to the dictates of reason. When the infant Jesus was born, and had come to satisfy for the sins of the world, he appeared to say to man: "Arise, man, for God has already pardoned thee: arise from the abyss of misery, for already God deposes the arms of his justice, which he held raised against thee: for with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light"—(*Ps. xxxv., 10.*) Is not this a great benefit—a great effect of infinite

mercy? How much then are we obliged to love Jesus, who in his incarnation and nativity has done and suffered so much for our love, and who has so much benefited us? We should certainly be the most ungrateful creatures of the world, if we do not correspond, by doing for him as much as we can in good works; suffering also our crosses in imitation of him, and in compensation for so many graces, restoring to him our whole hearts and beings. Being regenerated to grace with so much benignity by Jesus, we should begin a new life, as if we were newly created, confirming the saying of the prophet: "The people that shall be created, shall praise the Lord"—(*Psa. ci., 13.*) The apostle writes to the Ephesians: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works."—(*ii., 10.*) We should endeavour not to displease him in any way; assuredly he does not deserve it. At his birth he deigned to call himself our eldest brother: let us then love and respect him as such, and not offend him by our sins. Ruben said, : "Do not sin against the boy"—(*Genesis xlii., 22.*) for the youngest of his brethren Joseph; and I say for our first born Jesus: "Do not sin against the boy, for he is our brother and our flesh."

COLLOQUY.

Most amiable little infant Jesus, I have not the heart to contemplate you among so many hardships in the stable of Bethlehem. My dear Saviour, how could you have suffered in your tender members so much pain and poverty? Ah! it was your infinite

charity which made you suffer so much for us, miserable creatures! Be thou blessed, O my Jesus, a thousand times; blessed be your providence, your wisdom, your benignity. How could man imagine that you, O great God, who are seated in Heaven, above the seraphim, should deign to humble yourself, and suffer so much for him? “*Quid est homo quia magnificas eum? aut quid apponis erga eum cor tuum?*” “What is man that thou dost magnify him, and why dost thou place thy heart upon him?” Ah! you have honoured and benefited our miserable humanity too much! nor can our gratitude sufficiently correspond to your immense benefits: accept, however, our most humble thanks, and the devout tribute which we offer you of our hearts! Ah! my most sweet Jesus, turn, I beseech of you, your amorous eyes on our souls, and grant us the grace to attain the end of your incarnation and death. Offer to the eternal Father one of your precious tears to efface our sins, and raising from the manger your tender little hands bless us all in body and soul, for time and for eternity. Amen.

MEDITATION XVII.

On the Institution of the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

INTRODUCTION,

THOUGH the sun is always admirable in the heavens for its great light and beneficent influence, yet it is never more observed and admired by the world, than when it becomes obscure and eclipsed: when bril-

liant and luminous in the zenith, scarcely any one will turn his eyes to heaven to consider its light; but when it becomes pale and black, and is eclipsed, then every one turns to contemplate it. This observation is from Seneca: "*Solem nunquam magis miramur quam cum deficit*:" "We never admire the sun so much as when it is eclipsed." So God, the only Sun, though always entitled to our admiration for his Divine attributes and for the benefits he conferred upon the world, yet ought never to be so much admired by us as when he instituted the blessed Eucharist, and in it hid himself behind the sacred accidents. Oh! how great is this wonder, by which it appears God's charity towards man was exercised to its utmost limits. "*In finem dilexit eos*:" "He loved them to the end." It is true that he conceals himself under the sacred accidents; but then, precisely, he more perfectly unveils all his divine perfections; as Pliny writes of Timante, a celebrated painter, who never better displayed his art than when, by his admirable touches, he appeared to conceal the members of those personages whom he painted; "*Ostentat cum occultat*:" "He shows forth when he hides." The Lord in the sacrament unveils his omnipotence in such a manner, that the angelic doctor (*Opusc. v., 7*), seeking why the mystery of the Eucharist was not inserted in the symbol of faith—the creed, answers, that it is well comprehended in the creed, under these words: "*Deum omnipotentum*," because of the many wonders contained in the Eucharist. He shows in it his wisdom by the admirable manner in which he communicates

himself to man ; his providence, whereby he assists us in our necessities ; and thus he unveils all his other attributes.

In the present meditation we shall more particularly reflect on three excesses of benignity, which our Lord shows in this sacrament. 1. An excess of condescension. 2. An excess of beneficence. 3. An excess of charity.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine we see the holy child Jesus in the consecrated host, in that attire in which a remarkably virtuous man saw him, of the Society of Jesus, named Father Balthazar Alvarez, who being in prayer before celebrating, saw the holy infant in the sacrament, with hands and arms laden with most precious jewels : as if he could no longer bear so great a weight, he begged of him to relieve him and enrich himself with those treasures by communion, which he was about to receive.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Let us say to God with holy Job : "What is man that thou shouldst magnify him ? or, why dost thou set thy heart upon him ?"—(vii. 17.)

FIRST POINT.

In the Eucharist our Lord shows excessive condescension.

In the Incarnation the condescension of God was certainly great. He there humbled himself so much, that although an infinite and omnipotent God, he became a vile and miserable man, and thus appeared

to annihilate his great majesty under the vile semblance of a servant. "Semitipsum exinamvit formam servi accipiens." In the Eucharist his condescension is much greater, for he makes himself the food of man. In the Incarnation he assumes the form of a reasonable creature; in the Eucharist he takes the appearance of an insensible creature, namely, bread and wine: in the Incarnation he hid his Divinity, in the Eucharist he also hides his humanity: in the Incarnation he deigned to unite himself to one individual nature, which was holy and replenished with every grace; in the Eucharist he condescends to unite himself to each particular person, though he may have been a sinner and rebellious to his love: Certainly this is infinite condescension. If God had been pleased to remain in the society of man, in the most magnificent kingdom of the world, this would be an excess of condescension: how much greater then, not only to live with man, but to live within him, making his breast a living pyx, an animated ciborium of his entire body and blood.

When Solomon, after years of labour and the expenditure of vast treasures, had built his celebrated temple, which was a miracle of art, and the wonder of the universe, he could not persuade himself that God would condescend to dwell within it. What then would he now say, seeing the same God not only dwell with men, but even within their breast? To whom does he dispense this incomparable favour? To the sovereign pontiff, to kings, only to saints? Ah! no: he grants it to all, even to the poorest, the lowest class, to the most miserable in the world.

Our Lord in the most holy sacrament, does not disdain to go and seek them in hospitals, in prisons, in the galleys, in the most vile and loathsome places : that every one may easily and at pleasure enjoy this great benefit at all times, he instituted this sacrament under the ordinary and common matter of bread. He gave all priests the power of consecrating on any altar : although the King of kings, he does not disdain to obey the voice and enter the hands of any priest, how unworthy soever, who pronounces the words of consecration. What more ? He is contented always to remain enclosed as a prisoner in the tabernacles, to give audience to whoever wishes to have recourse to him at any hour of the day or night. O condescension ! O charity ! O infinite benignity ! What earthly king did ever half so much for his earthly vassals ? What king ever was obliged to give audience to his subjects during the night and day ? O infinite benignity of Jesus in the holy sacrament !

The last sign of the excess of our Lord's condescension in the Blessed Eucharist is, that he communicates himself to souls that are tepid and indisposed ; even to sinners, to the sacrilegious, if they approach to receive him. Oh ! this is an accumulation of humiliation worthy of astonishment ; if God is pleased to enter the bosom of sinners who are poor and low, at least poverty and vileness are not hated by God ; but tepidity in the just, and the wickedness of sinners are abominable to God.

The condescension of Christ in the sacrament goes so far as to grant the Eucharistic manna even to those who, unwilling and indisposed, make no ac-

count of this celestial gift, saying with the Hebrews in the desert: "Our soul now loatheth this very light food:" "Nauseat anima nostra super cibo esto levissimo."—(*Numbers xxi.*, 5.) Can we say more? He feeds with his Divine flesh and refreshes with his blood even the most ungrateful sinners. "He shall entertain and feed and give drink to the unthankful:" "Hospitabitur et pascet et potabit ingratos."—(*Eccles. xxix.*, 31.) If Jesus, in the holy sacrament, were capable of grief, oh! what bitterness would he feel in approaching the lips of him who communicates without affection and without any disposition? What immense regret would not his be, entering the bosom of a filthy and irregular sinner? It would appear to him the same as to be crucified again: "Crucifigentes sibimetipsos Filium Dei:" he would feel sinful thoughts more sharp than thorns; unmeasured words more bitter than gall: the evil ways of life harder than his cross, which our Lord indicated in the celebrated vision that recalled Videchindo, Duke of Saxony, from infidelity to the true faith. He was vanquished in battle by the Emperor Charlemagne: having made a treaty with him, he went in disguise to the imperial army to observe the sacred rites performed during Holy Week and at Easter; being much surprised, he said to the emperor: "Know, that whilst the priest distributed the Eucharistic bread for the paschal communion, I saw in each particle a most beautiful child, who entered into your mouth and that of many of your soldiers full of joy and delight; but to others he appeared melancholy and

retiring, turning himself about as if he refused to be placed on their lips." Hence, Charles persuaded him to embrace the faith, and Videchindo consented, and through the hands of St. Erimbert, a holy bishop, he was baptized in a most solemn manner. The emperor said he would be his godfather: in a short time the whole of Saxony came over to the true faith,—(*Albertus Cranzius, l. ii., Saxon, c. 23.*)

In this vision our Lord showed how much it displeases him to enter the breast of sinners; yet by infinite condescension, and worthy of all admiration, he is also received by them,

From this great consideration, I can draw two very important consequences.

1. What great disgust I cause Jesus in the holy sacrament, when I approach to receive him not only with coldness and without preparation, but with the soul all stained with defects. Ah! the most beloved Lord, in approaching my lips, cannot but be disgusted with my imperfections. If he were not restrained by his infinite goodness, he would expel me from his presence, How sad it would be, if, finding himself in my breast, I should even then remain cold, distracted, and without affection! If, after communion, I did not know how to thank him, and should quickly depart from him, how much would he feel this ingratitude! Could not Jesus Christ renew his ancient lamentations—"For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it, But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me, in the house of God we walked with consent."

(*Ps. liv., 13.*) That a man should offend me whilst far from me, he certainly does wrong; but that he should offend me, whilst I, with infinite condescension, admit him to my table and feed him with my flesh, oh! this cannot be borne! How will the seraphim in heaven wonder when they see treated so ill by a vile worm of earth that God whom they adore with the most profound respect. Even the demons in hell will be astonished at the excess of man's ingratitude towards Jesus in the holy sacrament.

The second consequence is, that if God in the Eucharist shows an excess of condescension, inclining his great majesty, at this sign of humiliation, to dwell in the breasts of miserable men, how much more should we, in receiving this sacrament, humble ourselves, and protest that we not only do not merit such a favour, but that we deserve to be deprived of it. Filled with amazement, we should exclaim with the seraphic St. Francis of Assisium: "Ah! Lord, who am I? and who are you? I, a worm of the earth, a miserable sinner, am to receive a God! You, God of infinite majesty, are to be received by a worm—a sinner, such as I am!"

We should also repeat the words with which Miphoboseth, the son of Jonathan, answered David, when with too obliging courtesy, he invited him to be always seated at the same table with him: "Thou shalt eat bread at my table always. He bowed down to him, and said: Who am I, thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" —(*2 Kings ix., 7.*) With such sentiments of most

just humility we should also correspond to the great condescension of Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament.

SECOND POINT.

In the Eucharist our Saviour shows the excess of great beneficence.

What the ancient Joseph did to recall his ungrateful brothers from their wanderings, was not without mystery. He hid a great sum of money in their sacks of wheat, and a rich silver cup.—(*Gen. xliv., 2.*) Having caused his brethren to be conducted before him as if guilty of theft, he enriched them all with gifts and singular benefits. This was a symbol of the immense treasures which Providence has hidden in the Eucharistic manna: thus we can say with truth with Jeremias (*xliv., 17*): “We were filled with bread.”

The better to understand this, it suffices to say, that in the sacrament God gives us his entire being. What more can be said? What more can man desire? He gives us all he has as God, namely, his Divinity: he gives us all he has as man, namely, his body and blood: he gives us all he has, both as God and man, namely, his merits, his satisfaction.

The lot of Magdalen was certainly very enviable, for with her tears she could bathe the feet of her Redeemer. The lot of the apostle Thomas was not less happy, who with his finger could touch his open side. A greater privilege was that of St. John, who could lean his head on the breast of Jesus: but what is this to the happiness we enjoy in the sacrament, by means of which we receive Jesus in our breast? Wo

can say with truth "Already God has become all to me, already God is entirely in me."

No such refined expression of intense love was heard of in the world as that of our Redeemer to St. Catherine of Sienna: having visibly approached her, he placed her hand on his chest, even within his breast; having taken out his heart, turning towards her, he said: "Here, O Catherine, take my Divine heart." Oh! what an astonishing excess of infinite charity, of love without comparison. Ah! holy faith, enlighten our minds to know what is most true. Whenever a faithful soul receives the holy Eucharist, he receives within himself the inestimable gift not only of the heart of Jesus, but of Jesus himself. Is not this an excess of infinite beneficence?

What more? The sacrament of the Eucharist, as St. Paschasius well observes (*Lib de sacr.*, xix.), is a prodigious extension of the Redemption to human nature. The whole man, composed of soul and body, was saved by the redemption: so by the Eucharist he is nourished and benefited in the soul as well as in the body. The river of Divine beneficence never diffuses itself with more plenitude on souls than in the Eucharist. "Flumen dei repletum est aquis: parosti cibum illorum." "The river of God is filled with waters: thou hast prepared their food."—(*Ps. lxiv.*, 10.) Here our Lord communicates his sanctifying grace more copiously than in all the other sacraments; for in the others grace is infused in order to perfect in us some particular virtue, or to preserve us from some particular evil:

thus in baptism, to cleanse us from the stain of original sin: in confirmation, to fortify us against persecution; so of the others: whilst the Eucharist perfects all virtues in us, and frees us from all evils. With it not only grace is given, but even the fountain of grace, who is God; he does not send us his supernatural gifts by the means of an angel, nor shower them from Heaven as manna or celestial dew, but he comes in person to bring them to us. Oh! what great benignity. That was certainly great condescension which our Redeemer showed the fathers in Limbo. When about making them sharers of the fruit of redemption, he did not call them forth from prison, as he did Lazarus from the tomb, nor send them an angel as he did to St. Peter, but with infinite condescension, went himself in person to Limbo, that they might enjoy the more fully the consolation of his presence and the delights of the beatific vision. Greater, however, is the kindness of our God in the Eucharist, for as the abbot Rupert observes (*lib. xii., de vict. verb Die, cap. xii.*): "When Jesus descended into Limbo, the soul of Jesus went separated from the body." To sanctify us both in soul and body, according to our capacity, the Eucharist communicates to the soul all supernatural gifts requisite for salvation and sanctification.

The angelic doctor proposes a question (*Opusc. xlviii., de sacram.*)—Why our Lord instituted this sacrament under the species of bread and wine? He resolves the doubt, saying: "This is the most vigorous nourishment of human life." To show us that bread and wine, more than any other nourish-

ment, preserve man's life, and strengthen him, thus the Eucharist preserves the spiritual life of the soul, fortifies it against all the temptations of the devil, and all the dangerous occasions of the World.

1. It so preserves the life of grace, that the primitive Christians, according to St. Augustine (*l. i., de pec. meritis, c. 24*), did not call the Eucharist by any other name but the sacrament of life. Being a living food, namely, Jesus, with his soul and Divinity, he thus disposes for immortal life.

2. It fortifies the soul against all enemies, renders it strong against the demons, who dare not molest him too much by temptation who has God with him in the sacrament; so that he can say with David: "I fear no evil because thou art with me." It renders him also strong against rebellious passions, mitigating the ardour of concupiscence. John Mosco relates (*in Prado Spirit., c. xxix.*), that an impious heretic having with great fury thrown a consecrated host into a cauldron of water which boiled on a great fire, the host not only remained untouched, but suddenly the water became cold, notwithstanding the burning coals on which it remained. Oh! how much more effectually does the Eucharist extinguish in man the fire of sensual appetite! Suffice it to say, that according to the common opinion of wise men, there is no better preservative against impure molestations, than frequently to receive the most holy Eucharist.

Finally, besides many other goods which this sacrament brings with it, it communicates to the soul an interior sweetness, as bread truly descend-

ing from heaven : so great is this spiritual delight that after having tasted it, several saints languished more and more from their great desire of partaking of it ; thus they could not live away from the holy communion.

St. Thomas moves this question (3 p. iv., 82) : If the Saviour at the last supper communicated himself ? Should we not answer in the negative : 1. Because the Gospel does not mention it : 2. He who receives should be distinct from the thing received : 3. Jesus was incapable of receiving an increase of grace, being the fountain of the same grace. Notwithstanding he answers in the affirmative, and subscribes to the opinion of St. Jerome (*ad Lactanc.*), who affirms it. Cajetan assigns the reasons : of the two principal effects of this sacrament, one is the augmentation of grace ; of this the Lord was not capable ; the other, the interior sweetness of this most holy food, which could well be enjoyed by the soul of Christ. See then what must be the sweetness of the blessed Eucharist when the Redeemer himself wished to taste and enjoy it. If the Eucharist diffuses so many benefits on the soul, it does not fail to confer them on the body also. In the ancient Testament when the people wished to soothe the anger of an irritated God, and to avert the strokes of his justice, they had no other sacrifices to offer but beasts already killed ; and such sacrifices were so little acceptable to God, that he once said with anger : " Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks ? or shall I drink the blood of goats ?"—(*Ps. xlix., 13.*) . In the new law of grace the world has the

most worthy and the most acceptable sacrifice to offer to God that can be imagined, namely, the adorable sacrifice of the Eucharist, by which the only Son of God offers himself to the Eternal Father. What kind of goods cannot be obtained, and what sort of evils avoided by such an offering? Woe to the world, woe to cities, to the people, if there were not the holy Eucharist! How much more frequently would there be plagues, wars, desolations! For which reason, the holy Church in these afflictions, by wise foresight, causes the most holy sacrament to be exposed on the altars for public adoration. She acts in the same manner as the prudent Abigail did who appeased the anger of David, when he came to destroy the cattle and vines of Nabal, her husband: She came before him with a present of some bread, whereupon the king put away every sentiment of revenge. Thus the holy Church offers to the Eternal Father the Eucharistic bread, and with it the adorable sacrifice of Jesus in the holy sacrament, which restores the faithful to grace, and obtains for them every benediction.

From all we have already said, we should first deduce, how deeply indebted we are to God for having given us this great sacrament, of which we can say: "There is no end of their treasures."—(*Isaias* ii., 7.)

From the holy altars he seems to invite us all to come to him, as he wishes to enrich us. "With me are riches and glory, that I may enrich them that love me, and may fill their treasures."—(*Prov.* viii., 18.) O infinite benignity! O inexpressible benefi-

cence! What can a God give us more, after having given us himself, and with himself all goods? What father, mother, or friend has ever done so much for any one? Ah! my God, if all our members were so many tongues, they would not suffice to thank you so much as is requisite. How much should I wonder at myself, seeing how little I profit of so great a benefit from God? Whence does it happen that, partaking of a divine nourishment, I do not become divine? St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say, that one communion well made, sufficed to make a person a saint." I make so many, and I am more irregular than ever. What does this indicate? Ah! this proceeds from my negligence and perfidy, by which I approach the holy altar so indisposed, that I even restrain the infinite beneficence of God, that he may not enrich me, even when he should have every desire to do so. Oh! what folly, what perversity is mine! The elder Joseph, after having entertained his brethren at a costly banquet, commanded his steward to fill their sacks with corn.—(*Gen.* xliv., 1.) Those received more, who had a greater number of sacks. The same happens to those who approach Jesus in the holy sacrament: those whose hearts are more void of the affections of the world, and more capable of containing the gifts of God, enrich themselves more. If I do not enrich myself with graces in communion, it is not because God is unwilling, but because my own disposition will not permit it.

THIRD POINT.

Our Lord in the Eucharist shows an excess of charity.

Amongst all the Divine attributes, charity is principally displayed in the Eucharist, insomuch that the angelic St. Thomas called it the sacrament of charity.

1. Because in the sacrament our Lord wished to be always with us: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."—(*Mat. xxviii.*, 20.) It is a mark of most congenial and dear friends to wish to converse always together; to eat together without ever being separated: and to experience no greater pain than to be separated one from another. Eliseus being several times commanded by Elias to separate from him, could not induce himself to execute the order, for it was very difficult for him to abandon his most beloved, and he said (*4 Kings ii.*, 27): "As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee." How clearly, by this sign, is the love of Jesus seen towards us? After having conversed for thirty-three years with men, received from them continual disgust, and outrages, at the end of his life, though he was to receive from the same men the most cruel death of the cross, yet he shows more displeasure at his departure from the world and from mankind, than at his death, so that he found this admirable manner of remaining with them, even after his death, by means of the Eucharist. Is not this an excess of infinite charity?

The institution of the Eucharist was a work long desired and expected by Jesus Christ: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you." Be-

fore the Incarnation, our Lord willed to be desired and expected for many centuries by mankind: in the blessed Eucharist, on the contrary, he himself it was who expected and desired: "With desire I have desired." What more can be imagined, to know the immense love of Jesus Christ towards us? Yet there is much more, for he not only wished to be with us in the sacrament, but he also wished to be within us. What great excess of benevolence is this? The Divine Word become man, showed great love towards Mary; conferred most singular honour on her, when he deigned to dwell nine months in her womb: though she was the most pure and holy mortal in the world, notwithstanding, the holy Church is in astonishment, saying: "Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb." What then can be said of the love and honour which our Lord shows us, by coming under the sacramental species into our breasts, taking up his abode within us, who are laden with so many sins? The friends of Job, through the great love they bore him, said, that they would wish to eat him alive, to place him in the midst of their heart. "Who will give us of his flesh, that we may be filled?"—(*Job xxxi., 31.*) What they said through exaggeration and in an enigma, we can say with all truth; whilst in the Eucharist we eat the flesh of Jesus Christ himself, and drink his blood, our Lord coming within us, wishes to place himself in our breasts as a seal of love. O inexpressible goodness of Jesus in the holy sacrament!

The centurion was amazed and confounded when

the Redeemer offered to enter his house: he exclaimed: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." How much more astonished should we be, seeing the same Redeemer who more than comes to our house, even enters within our breasts? He does not come forced and with disgust, but willingly and with pleasure. I will say more; he has often gone so far as to work miracles, in order to come more quickly, which may be observed by what happened to the Emperor Otho IV., who, in his last agony, desired most earnestly to receive the holy Eucharist: not being able, from the state of his illness, which caused him to reject every kind of food, he requested the principal assisting priests to bring the Divine Sacrament to him, that if he could not receive it, he might at least behold it. The priest immediately took from the pyx a sacred host and presented it to his view. The dying person then arose to adore the most holy sacrament, and extending his arms towards it, he appeared to wish to embrace and receive it. O prodigy! the adorable particle detaches itself from the hands of the priest, and with rapid flight goes to strike the breast of Otho, and with a mild wound penetrates even to his heart; and he, filled with immense content, as it were disgusted with life, happily expired: there remained after death a beautiful signal of the wound in the breast. A similar circumstance is related of the seraphic St. Bonaventure: when at the end of life, suffering from continual rejection of food, he durst not receive the holy viaticum, for fear of irreverence to-

wards the blessed sacrament, he requested and obtained that the eucharistic pyx uncovered, should be reverently placed on his chest, when immediately a sweet wound opened on his heart, like a vermillion rose, by which a divine particle entered.—(*Theoph. Raynaud de Euch.*, par. 182.) See, then, with what feelings our Lord comes into our breasts : he comes willingly—even with eagerness—such eagerness that he performs miracles to come the more quickly. Can a greater excess of charity be imagined?

Finally, the greatest excess of Divine love. Jesus in the Eucharist not only wishes to be with us, but to become, as it were, the same substance with us. “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, remains in me, and I in him.” Ordinary food is converted into the same substance of him who eats it. The Blessed Eucharist, on the contrary, changes into itself those who partake of it; thus, in a certain manner, all becomes divine, according to St. Leo: “Non aliud agit participatis corporis Christi quam ut in id quam sumimus transeamus.” What great love Christ shows in wishing to unite himself so intimately and strictly to man! In the Incarnation the Divine Word was solely united with the humanity which it assumed; but in the Eucharist Jesus unites himself with each individual who receives, and is spiritually ingrafted in him, according to St. Denis. (*De Eccl. Hier.*, ciii.) A fair branch ingrafted on a rustic trunk, beautifies the wild tree, and causes it to produce better leaves and more noble fruit; thus Jesus in the holy sacrament, uniting himself to man, sanctifies and enriches him with graces, and causes

him to produce fruits of merits and virtues. Oh ! what great happiness.

It is related of the venerable Maria Vala, a Cistercian nun, that one morning, after receiving the holy Eucharist, she was wrapt in ecstacy in which she had this vision : it appeared to her that our Saviour with his Divine hand took her heart, and placed it in the wound of his sacred side, and pressing it with his most holy heart, of the two he made but one, in order that each of them should be uniform in seeking the Divine glory. (*In vita Marchese Pan, quotid 23 Sept.*) This singular privilege of this servant of God, may in some manner be obtained by just souls, by means of holy communion : the soul being intimately united to Christ, appears to make but one with him. My soul admire, and bless, and know, as far as you can, the infinite charity of Christ in the holy sacrament. He, infinite sanctity and majesty, went so far as to unite himself intimately with man, a most vile worm and guilty of a thousand misdeeds ! O wonder ! O extent of Divine love ! With much more reason it can be said of the faithful, what Moses said in favour of the people of Israel : " Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions."—(*Deut. iv., 7.*) No, never was there seen in all past ages, so great a prodigy of love as God shows us in the sacrament in the new law of grace. How is it possible to know and meditate such endearing traits of Divine goodness, and not dissolve in love towards him, and conceive sentiments of just gratitude ?

Yet it is true, and it cannot be remembered without weeping, that so many in the world receive the holy Eucharist, and are favoured by God with infinite benignity : still they remain cold, distracted, without charity, and the great fire of the love of God does not cause them to experience a spark of warm affection. Ah ! should not those persons deserve to be for ever excluded from the holy altar as too unworthy of the Eucharistic benefit ? David inflicted a similar punishment on Miphiboseth : David at first, with singular condescension, allowed him daily to partake of his table : “ Miphiboseth shall always eat bread at my table,”—(2 *Kings* ix., 7) : but in a short time he dismissed him : because, forgetting the respect due to a king, “ Miphiboseth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king, and he had neither washed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his garments.”—(2 *Kings* xiv., 24.) Ah ! how much more should those deserve to be dismissed from the Eucharistic banquet, who not only approach ill disposed as to the exterior, which would be of less consequence. but cold and indisposed in the interior of the soul ? Ah ! how much should I be confounded, and reflect on this !

COLLOQUY.

Ah ! my Jesus in the most holy sacrament, behold me at your feet, prostrate on the earth, and whilst the seraphim adore you unveiled in Heaven on the throne of your glory, I adore you with a lively faith, veiled in the holy species, here on earth. I bless a thousand times your beneficent hand, which

dispenses this bread of angels, not to angels, but to us mortals, to make us pure, holy, and like to the angels. I thank your providence, which has enclosed in this food all celestial treasures; and, above all, I admire your infinite charity, which has urged you to remain with us and within us, and to become almost one thing with us.

Ah! I cannot refrain from exclaiming: "Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord; praise and exalt him for ever." How can I show a just return of gratitude for so great a benefit? "Quid dabo," I also say with Peter Cellenses (*lib. de Panib., cap. xiii.*), "ut ad te veniam, et ut te recipiam? Argentum et aurum non habeo, quod autem habeo, hoc tibi, Christe, do:" "What shall I give that I may come to thee and receive thee? Gold and silver I have not, but what I have, that I give thee." I have neither the gold of charity for God, nor silver of charity towards my neighbour, nor riches of virtues and merits, to compensate for your gifts, and to correspond with your love. What shall I then do? I will act as mendicants do with those who benefit them, namely, to accept of gifts, be pleased with them, and not only to thank the benefactor, but take courage to return several times to implore his help and assistance. In the same manner, O my Jesus, in the holy sacrament, I continually return to show you the desire I have to be restored with your Divine food, and to be enriched with your celestial treasures. Here then is what I give you. "Quid? Palatum apertum, fauces esurientes, oculos præ inopia languentes. Tantum posside, et sint tua: ista

dona mea :" "What? An open mouth, hungry jaws, eyes languid from want. Do thou only take possession of and make thine own, those gifts of mine." O my Jesus! be moved to compassion at my miseries, and grant me, with the sacrament, the plenitude of your graces, which will be to me as a pledge and foretaste of the eternal enjoyments of Paradise. Amen.

MEDITATION XVIII.

On the Pas-ion.

INTRODUCTION.

THE celebrated Michael Angelo Buonarotti once painted our Lord expiring on the cross. The representation was so expressive, that whoever looked at it, felt himself so moved that he could not refrain from weeping at the appearance of the bloody eyes, the pale and emaciated countenance, the livid lips, the swollen chest, the members torn. What caused much reflection in the spectators was the motto which he engraved at the feet—"No one thinks of it."

Oh! how profound are those laconic words! A God has arrived at this excess of love for man, that, in order to save him, he allowed himself to be mangled, tortured, and crucified. He was contented to die in a cruel, disgraceful manner, between thieves, on a cross. In the meantime, man, saved by his death, should correspond, by giving his life a thousand times for him: yet his ingratitude goes

so far, that he does not even remember nor think of him. "No one thinks of it."—(*Ps. cv., 21.*) "They forget God, who saved them, who had done great things." David also wept over it. Who could believe it, were it not seen every day? If the Redeemer had shed one drop of blood for us, or had he died quietly without any torture—had he even died of pure joy, as it has sometimes happened, yet not to think of it, would be strange ingratitude. What then, not to think of it, after his dying in so excruciating torture? This ingratitude, or rather injustice, our Lord is compelled to suffer from unthinking men. As the perfidious Jews who saw him on the cross on Calvary scarcely bestowed a passing thought on his sufferings, and not alone did not pity him, but even insulted him: "*Proterunt blasphemabant:*" "Passing by they blasphemed:" so, many sinners very rarely and slightly remember the passion of our Lord, and not only do not compassionate him, but return a thousand times to crucify him by their sins. Can anything more cruel be imagined? Let us not act thus; but let us earnestly consider the sufferings of Christ, and compassionate them with the most lively affection.

How shall we meditate on the entire passion of Christ, which is an immeasurable sea of pains? "I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me."—(*Ps. lxxviii., 3.*) To meditate on one stage of the passion, many months would not suffice; for we can say of each of these mysteries what Seneca said of the seven mouths of the Nile: "*Quodcunque acceperis ex eis, mare est;*" "Which-

soever of them you take, it is a sea." Let us then do what best we can, and in three points meditate the beginning, the continuation, and the ending of it; and in each point consider some particular suffering of our Redeemer. 1. In the beginning of the passion, in the garden, his sovereign abandonment. 2. In the midst, in the prætorium, sovereign ignominy. 3. At the termination, on Calvary, sovereign grief.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us cast an eye on the holy crucifix, and look upon it as the mirror of our souls, according to Diogone: "*Fecisti, Domine, de corpore tuo speculum animæ meæ:*" "Thou hast made, O Lord, of thy body, a mirror for my soul." Reflecting on Jesus, so humble, patient, and meek, let us contrast ourselves, so proud, irritable, and unmortified.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Let us beg of our Lord to give us grace to practise the virtues he has taught us by his passion, and thus correspond to his love.

FIRST POINT.

At the commencement of the passion in the garden, our Lord particularly suffered sovereign abandonment.

Men feel nothing more intensely, than to be abandoned by their dearest friends and intimate relations in their greatest calamities. Holy Job, in his grievous misfortunes, instead of complaining of his griefs, complained of his friends who had abandoned

him : even from afar, he requested their pity and assistance : " Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends." St. Theresa suffered aridity of mind in prayer for several years, and felt as if abandoned by God : she said this was the greatest pain imaginable. Jesus Christ, at the beginning of his passion particularly, wished to suffer the pain of sovereign abandonment : he could well allay all his cares by infusing into the inferior part a little of the enjoyment which he experienced in the superior portion of his soul by means of the beatific vision ; which purposely, he did not do, not to avoid suffering. This caused much wonder in the angelic St. Thomas, and made him assert, with reason, that the grief of Christ in the garden was pure grief, and without any admixture of comfort. There is no person on earth, however miserable, afflicted and abandoned by all, but who tries with agreeable thoughts and pleasing promises to mitigate his grief and console himself. Our Lord not only did not console himself, but gave licence to his passions, which had heretofore been hushed and obedient to reason, to assail him furiously, as so many untamed animals : so that " he began to fear and to be heavy."—(*St. Mark xix., 33.*) He placed before his imagination all the torments and the bloody scenes of his future passion ; he trembled from head to foot, was terrified, and grew cold. He then reflected, that after the shedding of so much blood, so great a number of men would be lost, without drawing fruit from his sufferings : at this thought, he grew pale, and languished in profound melancholy.

Finally, seeing that his passion should be unfruitful to so many, and overcome with great sadness, which caused him to be sorry for suffering so much for such perverse and ungrateful people, his sorrow arrived at such a height, that there arose within him a great conflict between the generosity of the spirit and the weakness of the flesh : generosity of mind wished the redemption of the world at any cost ; weakness of the flesh was unwilling to procure it, at least in so cruel a manner. Amidst so many combats and assaults, the soul of Christ sustained such grievous sufferings and pains, that he was reduced to the agonies of death ; therefore he said : " My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." Oh ! how great was this abandonment ! How dolorous ! how sensible !

The abandonment he suffered at the hands of his Eternal Father was not less grievous. And this abandonment was surely wonderful, for who ever heard that a father on earth abandoned his son, and that he refused, whilst able, to relieve his sufferings ? If the love of an earthly father for a son, though ungrateful, should effect so much, how much more can be said of the love of the Heavenly Father towards his only Son, who is innocence and sanctity itself ? The same eternal Father has ever been the consoler of all the afflicted ; he delivered Isaac from the fatal stroke ; he allayed the heat of the burning furnace for the three Babylonian children ; he delivered innocent Daniel from the lions ; how much more should he not console in the garden, his consubstantial Son ? He could easily do it. Other means were not

wanting to redeem the world, says St. Austin. "*Alius modus non deuit redemendi mundum.*" Jesus implores his assistance in the most humble and compassionate manner that can be imagined; he begged it of him on his knees, with his countenance inclined to the ground: "He fell flat on the ground," (*St. Mark xiv., 35,*) and begged it of him not once but three times; "*Oravit tertio eundem sermonem dicens; Pater si possibile est transeat a me calicem iste.*" "And he prayed a third time, repeating the same words: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:" and yet (who would ever believe it if the sacred text did not mention it?) The Eternal Father, not in the least moved by so many prayers and humiliations from such a Son, not only did not console him, but immediately sent an angel from Heaven, who quickly took flight to Gethsemane, first adored him as his God, then showed him a chalice of bitter gall, announced to him the irrevocable decree of Heaven, that he should die, and by the most cruel and ignominious of deaths on the cross. At this most fatal announcement, O God! who can relate the interior sorrow of Jesus, thus abandoned by his Eternal Father? Suffice it to say, that from the lively apprehension which Jesus conceived of the most cruel death which awaited him—such a thing was never before heard of—he began to sweat blood, and so copiously, that his garments being bathed in it, it began to flow by drops on the ground—even to run like a small rivulet. The stones even had compassion, as the venerable Bede relates: "Our Lord, finding himself on his knees

on a marble stone, it liquefied like wax, insomuch that the print of the knees remained profoundly impressed on it. Ah! poor Nazarean, how great must have been your grief, since it caused you to sweat blood! It could not be otherwise, for if men feel so much at being abandoned by their friends, what must it be to be abandoned by a father—an Eternal Father.

But perhaps the most afflicted Jesus found some kind friend to console him in some sort; but no, he is abandoned by his dearest disciples. Has he not brought to his assistance three of his most beloved apostles? What do they do? Do they not run to raise him from the ground, wipe away the perspiration, and restore his strength by some comforting relief? Nothing of all this; on the contrary, all three remain placidly asleep, without thinking of their Master. This loving Lord could not refrain from complaining sweetly: "Couldst thou not watch one hour?"—(*St. Mark xiv., 37.*) Oh! how ungenerous of the disciples!

How unjust an abandonment! Yet this was nothing compared with what another apostle did—namely, Judas. While Jesus was agonizing, and sweating blood for the benefit of the world, Judas went to the Scribes and Pharisees, and sold to them the life of his Divine Master, for no more than thirty pieces of vile money; then having placed himself at the head of a band of men, he went with spears, torches, halberds, and chains, to surprise Jesus in the garden. Jesus remembering his ancient love, goes to salute him, saying: "Friend, whereto

art thou come?"—(*Matt.* xxvi., 50.) The Divine countenance inclines to the hardened Judas, and receives the perfidious kiss of the traitor, who remains obstinate. Jesus sweetly upbraids him: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Judas, inexorable in his perfidious attempt, does not cease until Jesus is loaded with chains, and conducted by the soldiers to Jerusalem: thus was the Divine Nazarean abandoned in the garden by all those who were most dear to him; and by one betrayed unto death. He appeared precisely like that tree described by Daniel, which, so long as it remained standing and bearing leaves, was visited by the birds of the air; but scarcely was the voice heard, "Cut down the tree," (*Dan.* iv., 11,) than the birds fled from its branches. The prophecy of David relating to him, was confirmed; "They surrounded me like bees"—(*Ps.* cxvii., 12): as bees ever surround flowers so long as they can find any sweet to extract; but having gathered the honey, all depart: thus so long as the Redeemer was praised by the multitude, and working miracles in Jerusalem, all his disciples surrounded him, and every one followed him; but in the garden, when he is reduced to the agonies of death, "being in an agony," (*St. Luke* xxii., 43,) there is not even one to help him; one is even found plotting his death.

From this point, we are to draw various profitable fruits: 1. Lively compassion for the abandonment of the Redeemer. It was a great matter for Job, in his pains, to have friends to console him. The poor beggar who travelled from Jerusalem towards Jeri-

cho; had a kind Samaritan who comforted him in many ways. Jesus alone has no one in the garden to console him: "I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure standing," (*Ps. lviii., 2:*) yet he had always done good to every person: there never appeared before him an infirm, blind, or diseased person that he did not console, cure, or resuscitate. The infirm man at the pond called Probatica, abandoned by all, who said: "I have no man," (*John v., 7,*) was immediately assisted by our loving Lord. After having given consolation to all, now, in his greatest necessity, no one affords him any. Ah! my Jesus, how grievous must your torment have been, so much the more, seeing your Eternal Father was not propitious to you. Cesarius relates, that in a monastery of ancient fathers, Christ crucified appeared to a tepid monk, but with his back turned towards him, and thus reproved him: "Because thou art tepid, thou art not worthy to behold my countenance." At this intelligence, the miserable man was near dying with fright. How much greater must have been the bitterness of Jesus Christ, since without any demerit on his part, it appeared as if his eternal Father was averse to him?

The second fruit is a firm resolution never to abandon Jesus Christ in the occasions that present themselves. Ah! how often it occurs that good is omitted through human respect, in order not to displease a creature, displeasure is given to God! My soul, reflect well on it; perhaps you are among those of whom our Lord complained: "My people have done two evils: they have forsaken me, the foun-

tain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”—(*Jer. ii.*, 13.)

Finally, the third fruit is the patience we should have when creatures abandon us, and the uniformity with the Divine will when the Creator appears to abandon us. First. When our friends forget us, when our parents do not assist us, and when those who are most indebted to us are ungrateful, we should not despair, saying: “I have no one for me.” How can that be, since the providence of God assists all? If he permitted ingratitude and want of deference, it is for our good, to detach us from creatures and make us know that the only true friend, who never abandons us, is God. Second. We should not be dismayed when we are not heard nor consoled in our prayers, nor should we break out into these inconsiderate expressions: “God appears as if he had forgotten me; even the saints do not listen to me.” What boldness in us to wish to be always heard in our prayers, when the Son of God in the garden was not heard, after having thrice prayed for the same thing: “He prayed the third time, saying the self same word.”—(*Mat. xxvi.*, 44.) It is not true that God ever abandons us, though he appears to do so to make a trial of our virtue. St. Catherine of Sienna was once very melancholy on account of the aridities she experienced in prayer, it appearing to her that her celestial spouse had abandoned her, when suddenly our Lord appeared to her, she said: “Ah! my Jesus, where were you?” “Where was I?” replied our Lord. “I was hidden

within your heart, and I assisted you, that you might not fall into diffidence."

SECOND POINT.

In the midst of the passion, in the Prætorium, our Lord particularly suffered sovereign ignominy.

In the continuation of the passion, the ignominies were not less than the pains. Not being able to meditate on both together, let us meditate only on the ignominies.

It is most certain that all men, especially the wise and noble, feel in a much more lively manner, prejudices against reputation, than corporal pains; honour being frequently more esteemed than life itself. King Saul, defeated in battle, said to his armour bearer: "Draw thy sword and kill me, lest these uncircumcised come and slay me, and mock at me."—(1 *Kings* xxxi., 4.) The valiant Razias, being surrounded by five hundred soldiers of King Antiochus, chose "to die nobly rather than fall into the hands of the wicked, and to suffer abuses unbecoming his noble birth."—(2 *Mach.* xiv., 42.) The Divine Nazarean then, as God was the supreme Monarch of all kings: as man he descended from the royal race of David: as Wonder-worker and preacher of his new law, he was the person who had most credit in all Jerusalem, in so much that the people flocked in thousands to hear his celestial doctrine, and to see the wonderful prodigies which he wrought; yet he condescended to satisfy for the faults of human pride, by suffering so many and so

great ignominies, as to surpass all expectation. "I have been humbled exceedingly."—(*Ps. cxv.*, 1.)

1. How great was the confusion for Jesus Christ when seized in the garden, to enter Jerusalem, surrounded with ropes and chains like an assassin, in the midst of a crowd of perfidious rebels, who purposely led him through the most populous streets, in which he had received so much applause and veneration? O God! what an affront was this to Jesus Christ. All certainly must have been astounded when they saw him. They pointed the finger at him and said: "There is Jesus of Nazareth! see! who could have believed that he was an infamous person." And Jesus heard these and saw these and said not a word, but with downcast eyes and shame in his countenance, he pursued his way. Would not this alone suffice to cause him to die with confusion? When Aman was obliged by King Assuerus to go through the street of the city as groom, holding the bridle of the horse of Mardochai, whom he so much hated, the sacred text says, Aman felt so much confused, that he "made haste to go to his house, mourning and having his head covered."—(*Esther vi.*, 12.) How much greater must have been the confusion of Jesus Christ appearing in the most public streets, not as a servant, but as a robber and malefactor!

2. What confusion for Jesus Christ to be conducted to so many tribunals, namely, to Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and to be there accused, calumniated as a drunkard, as one possessed, a seducer of the people? Not only not to find his innocence jus-

tified by so many judges, but to have them all against him, insomuch that one of them seeing an insolent soldier, who in his presence and without any cause, gave him a blow on the face, was silent and did not resent it: another despising him as a man void of sense, sent him through the city, arrayed in a white robe as a fool: another, after having recognised his innocence and declared it, condemned him first to be flogged, then to be crucified. What outrages were these for Christ and how dolorous! for as the angelic doctor teaches, (3^d p. q., 4,) the pain felt by one who is innocent is always greater, as it is not deserved.

3. How great an injury was offered to Christ by condemning him to be flogged? If those impious wretches, contrary to all laws of justice, wished to punish him, at least they might have done so with one of the chastisements usually given to persons of noble birth: but no, they punished him with stripes, a pain which was inflicted on wicked slaves, (*Eccl.* xlii., 5); it was also given to robbers, who thence were called *latrones*, from the punishment they sustained in their sides by lashes. What more? They chastise him after having tied him to the pillar, which was very unbecoming for a noble person. Abner, Saul's captain, accepted death, but would not have his hands bound or his feet laden with fetters. "Nequaquam ut mori solent ignovi mortuus est Abner."—(2 *Kings* iii., 34.) Jesus, besides, was scourged naked, which was a source of immense confusion to him: finally, they strike him not alone, with thirty-nine strokes. according to the statute of

the Jews, nor with forty, according to the prohibition in *Deuteronomy*, but with an immense number of stripes, which would have been endless, if a Roman soldier of the court of Pilate, enraged at so much wickedness, had not unsheathed his sword and cut the ropes which bound him. How injurious to Jesus was his flagellation? Ah! if even it had not been most painful, the shame alone which the Redeemer sustained in it, would have been for him a great torment.

4. The crowning with thorns was in a singular manner outrageous to Jesus: the perfidious Jews, intending at the same time to torment him as guilty, and deride him as a mock king, pressed on his head a diadem of most cruel thorns: they put an old purple garment around him, and a reed in his hand as a sceptre. Who can relate the scoffs they added? The prophet David shows they cannot be expressed when he says: "Super dolorem vulnerum meorum addiderunt:" "They have added to the pain of my wounds."—(*Ps. lxxvii., 27.*) Others bending the knee before him, pretended to adore him; then, with a stick, strongly beat the thorns on his head: others with affected irony, salute him as King of the Jews: some tear his hair, others pluck his beard, others give him kicks; some give him such violent blows, that even from afar off the sound was heard, as it was revealed to St. Bridget (1 *Book Rev.*, iv.) All derided him in a thousand ways; having first bandaged his eyes and face in order that the grave dignity of his countenance might not deter them. O God! what more contumelious can be said? Pilate,

the judge, exposes Jesus in this opprobrious condition in a balcony in sight of all the people, saying : " Behold the man." The ungrateful Jews cry out with a loud voice : " Let him be crucified, release unto us Barabbas : " a robber, a seditious man in preference to him ! The timid judge, consenting to their iniquitous wishes, condemned him to the infamous gibbet of the cross : For greater scorn he causes him and not Barabbas to go to Calvary, bearing his cross upon his shoulders. Here is the great mocking which was made in the Prætorium of the honour, esteem, and reputation of Jesus Christ.

From this point we may draw two most important fruits. 1. A most lively and tender compassion for Jesus Christ. Where on earth was there ever seen a contempt similar to his ? Truly was fulfilled the prophecy (*Thren.* iii., 30) : " Saturabitur opprobis," that he should not only be filled, but saturated with opprobriums. With great reason he was assimilated to a flower of the field ; " Ego flos campi." " I am the flower of the field."—(*Cant.* ii., 1.) Why from the field and not from the garden ? Because little flowers in the field are trodden on without any consideration ; for the same reason he is called a worm of the earth " vermis sum et non homo" for little worms are in the same manner trodden on by passengers. Ah ! my Jesus, how much from my heart do I compassionate you ! I do not know how you did not die a thousand times of confusion from so many ignominies, and I do not know why I do not die through compassion for so many insults which you have received.

The second fruit is, to reflect on the cause why Jesus would suffer so much scorn and confusion. Our Lord willed it, to confound our pride and to teach us evangelical humility. Ah! how many are there in the world, who, though otherwise good, know not how to yield or humble themselves in anything; they think it lawful for them to say: "My esteem and reputation are here concerned." Ah! fools; true esteem for a Christian is, to be humble, after the example of the Divine master: he will then acquire more honour before God, when he seems to lose it with the world. Besides, a God could suffer so much contempt and ignominy for the love of man. What more can be said, than a God? Man, a most vile worm of the earth, cannot suffer, for the love of the same God, some slight prejudice to his esteem! St. Ignatius the martyr did not thus feel. When he received blows and insults on his way to Rome to suffer martyrdom he exclaimed with joy: "Now, I begin to be a disciple of Christ." My soul, resolve then to cure your excessive pride, by the humility of Jesus Christ.

THIRD POINT.

At the termination of the passion on Calvary, our Lord particularly suffered sovereign grief.

The whole course of the passion of our Lord was truly interspersed with most bitter dolours and pains. The height of all the torments suffered by Jesus, was at his crucifixion on Calvary: 1. To die on the cross, as the angelic doctor says (iii. p., 33 q., art. 6), is the most cruel of all deaths; therefore, who-

ever dies on the cross, expires of pure torture, and has to suffer sovereign and lengthened pain. Provident nature has so disposed of other pains, either that they be tedious and tolerable, or insufferable and short: thus, the pain of death being the greatest of all pains, it is also the shortest; but he who is crucified, suffers both intense pain from the severe wounds which he receives from the nails in the most nervous and sensitive parts, namely, the hands and feet; he also suffers very tedious pain, for he does not die at one stroke, like one pierced with a sword, or strangled, but he loses life by slow degrees, the blood flowing from the wounds drop by drop.

2. The punishment of crucifixion was much more tormenting to Jesus than to others; for the thieves were strong and robust, therefore better able to resist the vehemence of pain. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, was of a most delicate complexion, like the little worms of the earth, more sensitive to every pain; besides from the flagellation, his veins were exhausted, his strength diminished, and all his members scarified and wounded, he could no longer resist the great torment: he was obliged on the cross to abandon himself to languor and to agony.

3. The crucifixion of Jesus was executed with extraordinary fierceness. If the Jews had no pity when crucifying robbers, at least they had humanity; they did not tear them more than was necessary, as they had no ill-will or anger against them: but they did not thus behave in crucifying the Redeemer, for they had implacable hatred against him, and desired nothing more earnestly than to see him dead.

When on Calvary they had attained their end, of being able to crucify him with their own hands, O God! who can relate with what ferocity and inhumanity they executed the sentence of Pilate? Paying but little regard to the two robbers, they turned towards Jesus; one began quickly to polish the nails, another excavated the hole to plant the cross, another extended the same cross on the ground, then furiously tearing off the garments of Jesus, they did not lay him, but by one blow threw him on the murderous wood; the fiercest of the executioners, clasping the Divine right hand, and, O God! with what agonizing torture, piercing it with a large pointed nail, with repeated blows of the hammer fixed it on the right side of the cross; then—who can relate it without horror? placing his impious foot on the side of Christ, and dragging the left hand, nailed it to the other side; finally, placing one foot over the other, with a larger and more penetrating nail, he pierces the two with so atrocious torture, that it is easier imagined than explained. Those barbarians raising the cross on high with the crucified Nazarean, whose blood flowed in rivulets from the wounds, caused it to fall suddenly into the destined hole; and the fall shook all the limbs of Jesus, and opened his wounds still more and pained him grievously.

My afflicted Jesus, how could you suffer so cruel butchery? If only to think of it makes us shudder, what must you have felt in suffering? St. Francis of Assisium used to say, that rather than suffer the pain of his wounds, he would bear the most cruel

death ; yet he was not suspended by nails : his nails were not of iron, but of flesh. What martyrdom was not then yours, in being suspended from the gibbet, and with such atrocious nails ? I cannot understand how you did not immediately die by the excess of extreme pain, and how you could survive for several hours after your crucifixion. All this happened, because it did not suffice for you solely to die for the love of man, but in one death you wished to suffer for him a thousand deaths.

Our Lord agonized in torture for several hours on the cross, without ever finding a position which was not tormenting : if he rested his head he found the thorns piercing in deeper ; if he threw himself forward, the wounds opened still wider ; wherever he turned his eyes, he met something tormenting : here, his mother in desolation ; there, a robber who outraged him ; all around the Jews, who insulted him ; an eclipse in the heavens, darkness in the air, earthquakes on the earth. Amidst so many dolours, he had not one to give him assistance ; he asked for some relief to assuage his thirst, and he was saturated with gall and vinegar. He could not receive assistance from his disciples, for they had all fled : “*Omnes eo relicto fugerunt ;*” nor from his mother, as it would not be permitted by the Jews ; besides, she was so feeble and exhausted she required some one to console her. Surely, the Eternal Father at least, who is infinite mercy, gave him some consolation. But the Eternal Father had so abandoned him that the afflicted Redeemer could not refrain from sweetly complaining : “*My God, my God,*

why hast thou abandoned me?" Thus martyred from interior grief, bloody, wounded in all his members, he falls a last into his agony; his countenance grows pale, his lips livid, his chest swells, his eyes close, he bows his head and breathes his last sigh: "Expiravit." O God! O God! What a cruel death! what a tormenting martyrdom was not that of Jesus? Who can ever think of it without being moved to compassion? Let us then weep bitterly for the death of our Father, more than children weep at the death of their parents. If the angels of peace wept so bitterly at the death of Jesus, for whom he had not died, how much more should we weep, for whom Jesus died, in order to redeem us?

In weeping, let us reflect on the infinite love which our Lord showed us by his death. "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us."—(1 *John* iv., 9.) Who on earth, even a father, or a most intimate friend, caused himself to be put to death for the love of a son, or a friend, as Jesus did for us? Consider the manner in which he dies. He expires with his arms open to embrace sinners, with the head inclined to give them the kiss of peace, and with his side opened, to show to the world his noble and amorous heart. O infinite charity! O love without comparison, and without measure! "It is true, by this hath the charity of God appeared to us." Let us be confounded at our ingratitude, who do not know how to correspond to a God crucified for us, not even by patiently bearing with our smallest crosses. It appeared too little to the love of Jesus, to die for us by so bloody a torture; and

to our delicacy, the slightest mortification we suffer for God appears too much.

St. Peter, martyr, a Dominican, was imprisoned for several months, without any fault on his part; being tired of suffering, he once thus complained before the crucifix: "Ah! Lord, what evil have I done to you, that I should always remain in this prison?" He was then answered in a wonderful manner from the crucifix: "Peter, what evil have I done, that I should remain on this cross?" The saint then humbled and weeping, begged pardon of Jesus for complaining. To how many who complain in their crosses, could our Lord make a similar answer?

Finally, seeing Jesus crucified for our sins, we should compassionate, thank, and bless him; above all, we should firmly resolve not to crucify him anew by our sins. This proposition should seem useless, as a thing not possible to happen; for it would be ingratitude not to give one's life for him who first died for man. If it would be ingratitude not to love him, who could imagine that any one should wish to cause him again to die? Human perversity has, however, arrived so far, that in order not to return to crucify Jesus, we are constrained to make resolutions, and these resolutions are not often observed. O God! what cruelty! Longinus showed great ferocity by wounding the side of Christ after his death: what then would it be to return to crucify him with a thousand blows? What punishment should be inflicted for it?

COLLOQUY.

My crucified Jesus, here I am at your feet humbled and weeping. I adore you most humbly as my God, and my Redeemer. I admire your infinite charity and mercy, which have urged you to die for us, miserable men. I thank you without end for so singular a benefit which you have conferred on us, by redeeming and saving us. I compassionate you in the most lively manner for so many torments and affronts which you have suffered in satisfaction for our sins. Ah ! this punishment and this death was not due to you, who are innocence itself ; it was due to me, who am the most wretched. I am the one guilty of your chastisements, and more than the Jews I have crucified you by my sin. I have as often crucified you as I have sinned : death, then is due to me, and not to you ; and if I am, worthy of death, I will die at your feet of contrition and repentance for having offended you. Accursed sins, which have occasioned the death of a God, I detest and abominate you ; and sooner than commit you again, I would wish to die a thousand times. Forgive, O Jesus, forgive. On the cross, you prayed to the Eternal Father for your crucifiers : " Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do." Pray, then, to the Eternal Father also for me, who am ignorant, who have committed faults without well knowing their malice. And you, O Eternal Father—" respice in faciem Christi tui." " Look at the face of thy Christ." I should not dare appear before you, being the murderer of your Son ;

yet that Son crucified by me, asks you to pardon my sins. "Ignosce, illis:" "Forgive them, these wounds cry to you for me;" "Ignosce," this wounded heart cries; "Ignosce," these bloody and scarified members cry out; "Ignosce," then, O Eternal Father, I also say, with St. Austin (*in Med. c.*, lxviii.): "Vide redemptoris supplicium et dimitte redempti delictum; attende in filio, quo propitius es in servo:" "Look at the punishment of the Redeemer, and forgive the crime of him who is redeemed; consider in the Son what will appease you with the slave." Finally, "Quoties beatæ prolis tibi patent vulnera, delitescant, obsecro scelera mea:" "As often as the wounds of thy Son are exposed to thee, let my crimes, I beseech thee, be hid."

In the meantime, I resolve, with your assistance, to compensate Jesus with as much love for my past ingratitude; and now that he is dead for me, I wish to bury him in my heart. I know that he wishes for a new monument. I wish to please him by renewing and cleansing this heart of mine. Henceforth, I wish to conceive new affections, new manners, new thoughts, new life—"in monumento novo."

MEDITATION XIX.

On the dolours of Mary at the foot of the cross.

INTRODUCTION.

MARY at the foot of the cross was certainly a martyr, and queen of martyrs: by her most singular purity,

she is, with reason, called virgin of virgins ; so by her most dolorous martyrdom, she can be styled martyr of martyrs. According to Richard of St. Victor, in which all the fathers and doctors agree, reason so clearly persuades it that it cannot be doubted. With this supposition, it is well to reflect on the qualities of her martyrdom—how noble, and worthy of a mother of God. It is well known, that human justice, even in inflicting death, the greatest of all torments, wishes those persons to be honoured who are more considerable ; thus, the nobility and soldiers are generally despatched with the sword, not hanged ; others of higher rank were strangled with a golden rope. Abner, captain of Saul, being condemned to die, said : “ I will die ; but I will never consent to die as a coward, with hands and feet fettered : ” so that David said : “ Not as cowards are wont to die hath Abner died, ”—(2 *Kings* iii., 33.) When Cassandro sent a squadron of soldiers to murder Olimpia, mother of Alexander the Great, she went out to meet them, decked in royal attire, to die as a queen, and showed such courage, that even in death she could be recognised as mother of the great Alexander. God then wishing that Mary should be martyred in the world, by a high counsel of his providence disposed that she should receive a most noble martyrdom, such as was suitable to the mother of God ; he did not will that she should be tormented by the hatred of wicked men, but by the love of God himself. As, according to the doctrine of the angelic doctor, love is much stronger than hatred, so the martyrdom of Mary was more noble,

also more dolorous than that of the other martyrs, for her love was strong as death.

This is the object of the present meditation, in which we shall consider that Mary was martyred by the strong love of three persons. 1. By the love of the Eternal Father, which obliged him to will the death of his Son. 2, By the love of the Son, which obliged her to assist at his death. 3. By the love of man, which obliged her to love and benefit him even when he was crucifying her Son,

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine Mary on Calvary in dolours, at the foot of the cross: pale in countenance, in amazement, with her hands crossed on her breast, all covered with blood, which fell on her from the wounds of her Son,

SECOND PRELUDE.

Let us say from our heart to Mary: Ah! dolorous mother, you suffer for my love; do not permit me to be ungrateful to you: share your pains with me, that I also may weep through compassion for your pains.

FIRST POINT.

Mary was martyred with love for the eternal Father, that obliged her to will the death of her Son.

It is common to friends and to all those who love each other reciprocally, to have the same will in all things. Who then is not aware that Mary always loved God most ardently, and more than all crea-

tures in the world? Who does not know that Mary had ever one sole will and sentiment with Jesus? Each appeared to have but one sole heart, as it appeared revealed by Mary herself to St. Bridget; consequently, Mary knowing it to be the will of the Eternal Father that Christ should die—knowing, besides, it was the will of Christ to accomplish the decrees of his Father, she was also constrained, through love, to will the death of him whom she loved more than herself, and to will it with such ardour, that St. Anselm attests, if executioners had been wanting, she would have placed him with her own hands on the cross.

Although Abraham most tenderly loved his son Isaac, so soon, however, as he heard it was the good pleasure of God that he should be sacrificed on the mountain, in spite of his repugnance, he consented to the dolorous sacrifice: thus Mary, who was gifted with much greater virtue than Abraham, knowing that the eternal Father willed the death of his Son, she also willed it. But since what Mary has willed, through the force of love, was so contrary to her inclinations, and so dolorous to her heart, she had to sustain the most cruel of all martyrdoms.

The unfortunate daughter of Jephtha, knowing that she was destined for sacrifice by the vow of her father, accepted of death; but she felt so great pain and lively grief, that she entreated and obtained two months to weep over her misfortune: during the interval she did nothing but wander about, being inconsolable, making the hills and forests resound with her sobs and groans. How much more then must Mary

have felt to the heart's core the severe necessity of consenting to the death of her most beloved Jesus? She had to say, I must will the death and torments of him whom I love more than myself. O most cruel martyrdom and inexpressible pain. There is, however, great difference between Mary and the daughter of Jephtha, for if she felt great grief in accepting her own death, she had some means of alleviating it by weeping for two months; but Mary had not this solace in accepting the death of her Son: the better to show her love to the Eternal Father, notwithstanding her immense grief, she wished to execute the Divine will with intrepidity and courage, without shedding a tear, without breathing a sigh, without falling down in a faint. "There *stood* by the cross of Jesus his mother." The angels of peace sobbed at the death of Christ, the sun was darkened, the moon eclipsed, the earth trembled, all creatures were put in commotion, and Mary—and Mary, in the midst of these terrors, was firm and immoveable. In suffering grief without demonstration, without alleviation, she sustained a martyrdom without comparison, and without example; such as would be that of any impassioned mother, who seeing her only son dead before her, should at the same time be constrained not to weep or complain.

What is, however, most worthy of astonishment, Mary not only conformed to the Divine will concerning the death of her Son, and suffered it with intrepidity, but she also concurred in it, as an intrepid priestess, offering to the Eternal Father the holocaust of her expiring Son. Mary did not re-

main at the foot of the cross like the ancient Resfa before two of her sons, crucified by the Gabaonites, to defend them from wild beasts, but she remained to concur to the great sacrifice which was offered for the redemption of mankind. It was revealed to St. Bridget, that as Adam and Eve had ruined the world together, thus Jesus and Mary had both restored it on Calvary; with this difference, adds Salmeron; the ruin of the world commenced by Eve, who gave the forbidden apple to Adam to eat: whereas, the reparation of the world commenced by Christ, who having tasted the bitter wood of the cross, gave it also to his mother. Whoever wishes to comprehend the most bitter pang felt in the heart of Mary, let him imagine a father or a mother constrained to immolate a son. O God! how great pain would thence be experienced? what tears, what fainting? How the hand would tremble? How often would the arm be raised to deal the murderous stroke; then, losing courage, would stop when but half lifted? It would certainly be less painful for a parent to be murdered than to murder a son. Ah! afflicted Mary; she is on Calvary, as one that sacrificed the Son in the presence of the Father. (*Eccles. xxxiv., 24.*) She is more than mother and priestess; concurring by her sufferings to the sacrifice offered for the human race, and offering it to the Eternal Father. O torment! O martyrdom! easier to be imagined than expressed! Hence we should conceive tender compassion for Mary: How by the vehemence of grief, was not her heart rent asunder! How much a father suffers when obliged

slightly to correct his son ! How much does he desire that some one intercede for him ! How immeasurably more had Mary to suffer, concurring on Calvary, not to the slight chastisement, but to the holocaust of her Son, and such a son !

Nicephorus relates (*l. xii., c. 4*), that in the horrid butchery made in Thessalonica, by order of the Emperor Theodosius, amongst the rest, two children of a most afflicted father were conducted to death : he wept so much, and offered so much money to the soldiers, that they consented to liberate one : it was not permitted to save both. The miserable father, shedding a torrent of tears, said : " No ; I have not courage to make this cruel choice between those whom I equally and passionately love : " so the soldiers dragged them both to death. Doubtless it was less painful for the unfortunate parent to see each of them put to death, than to consent to the death of one alone, so insupportable it is to the heart of a father willingly to accept the death of a son. What a cruel martyrdom was it not then for Mary, when, through love for the eternal Father, she accepted, and even concurred to the death of her Son, whom she loved more than any earthly parent ever loved a child ?

2. We should learn from Mary conformity to the Divine will, even in the things most displeasing to us. Oh, how different we are from you ! If we are touched by God with any adversity, with the death of some intimate relative, oh ! what despair is felt ; how many lamentations, as if God were too severe with us. Ah ! Mary, with intrepidity, and

without shedding tears, could conform to the Divine will in the death of the Son of God, and we cannot be resigned, and restrain our grief in the death of a relative or a friend, who doubtless often displeased us. Mary conformed to the Divine dispensations, for she knew them to be most just and holy, and directed for the salvation of the world. Why should not we also be resigned, well knowing whatever God does is for our good? When he afflicts our body with chastisements, then he more than ever instructs and sanctifies the soul. Let us reflect on this with confusion, and with a firm resolution of amendment.

SECOND POINT.

Mary was martyred by the love of her Son, which obliged her to assist at his death.

Mary certainly could have enclosed herself within her own dwelling, not to be present at the crucifixion of her Son. 1. Not to suffer the great pain she foresaw from such a spectacle. Agar of old, when travelling through the wilderness of Bersabee, and seeing her little child in his agony, placed him on a stone, then retiring apart, she began to sob, saying: "No, I cannot bear to see a son die: 'Non videbo filium morientem.'"

2. Because her virginal modesty should have persuaded her not to remain in sight of those wicked Jews, who, in crucifying her Son, would have cursed and scorned her also, as mother of a man so odious to them.

3. She could justly believe that her presence and

compassion would have greatly increased the pains of her Son ; as it is usual to keep away parents, wives, and children from the apartments of the dying, that pain be not increased on either side : for the same reason, Mary could exempt herself from assisting at the agony on Calvary, and at the death of her Son. Why did she not ? Because the exceedingly great love she bore her Son, obliged her to assist at his death, thus to suffer a most cruel martyrdom.

The apostles fled from Calvary, and all the other Hebrews who had received benefits from Christ, because their love was not fervent nor great ; fear had greater power over them ; but Mary, who loved Jesus without measure, did not fear the Jews, minded not the repugnance of her virginal modesty, nor the intense grief she was to suffer : she could not for a minute detach herself from him whom she loved more than herself : intrepid, constant, and faithful, she always kept him company. This most prudent virgin well knew, that if at the view of her crucified Son, she did not lament, she should appear cruel : if on the contrary, she grieved too much, she should much increase the sufferings of Jesus. On what then does she wisely determine ? She grieves with profound sorrow, which as much as possible lessens that of the Redeemer : like a ship in a storm, which pushed by contrary winds, is driven back and obliged to remain immoveable, thus Mary, combated by contrary affections, namely, by a sovereign grief and a sovereign fear of increasing the sufferings of her Son by her compassion, remains immoveable, as if

astounded by the horror she felt at an expiring God. "Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus." O God! who could ever express what were the pangs of her heart? If the celebrated mother of the Machabees was called by St. Augustine, (*ser.* 300,) seven times a martyr, because she compassionately was present at the martyrdom of seven of her children; Mary, constrained by her love to see the martyrdom of her Son, who was above all value, certainly may be styled a thousand times a martyr. To speak properly, she, considering the agonies of Jesus, suffered more than the object of her compassion: according to the angelic doctor, (2. 2. *qu.* 30. *a.* 1,) compassion concerns the pains of others, not one's own: then, one who compassionates the sufferings of a son or a father, who is, as it were, another self, to speak correctly, suffers, rather than sympathises. How great a martyrdom then was it for Mary to be under the cross near her agonizing Son? When Jesus, bowing down his thorny head from the cross to consider his mother, and Mary raising her eyes to look at her Son, their eyes reciprocally met, ah! what impassioned looks. Jesus, with a bloody and expiring countenance, begged assistance from Mary, who would have died to procure it for him; however, she was totally unable to afford him any help. O God! what pain did she not feel when Jesus groaned—when he languished—when he sighed from thirst. Ah! what a dolorous echo was caused in the heart of Mary. The afflicted mother being unable to stand upright, embraced the cross and placed her head on it, she then felt the blood flowing on

her from the divine wounds; seeing her mantle sprinkled with the same blood, she sobbed and groaned, and could not refrain from embracing the purple cloth, and pressing it lovingly to her bosom : she could have desired a thousand hearts to compassionate her Son, so much the more as she saw him bereft of compassion : the bad thief she heard blaspheme him, and the perfidious Jews mock and insult him. She said, within herself : Ah ! my poor Son, what a bad return you receive from mankind, whom you have so much benefited ! The height of Mary's dolours was when the Redeemer, after having been tortured for several hours on the cross, was reduced to the last agony : it was a stupendous miracle that she did not then die : when she saw the breast of Jesus swelled, his lips pale, finally bowing his head towards her—"inclinato capite"—and collecting on his bloody lips the last sigh, "emisit spiritum." O God, what inexplicable martyrdom ! How willingly would she not have died a thousand times rather than see her Jesus dead ! How unfortunate did it not appear to her to survive him who was her life and her soul !

Most afflicted mother, who can be found so hard-hearted as not to compassionate your pains ? Who would not mingle his tears with your lamentations ? This, however, does not suffice : we should also learn from Mary, who remained so faithful at the foot of the cross, a tender devotion to the holy crucifix, by remaining often at its feet, meditating its pains, thanking for them, and begging pardon for our sins, which were the cause of the death of Jesus. Let

us often in spirit, like doves, inhabit the holes of his wounds. God ordered Noe to construct numerous little rooms in the ark for every different species of animals, that one should not be prejudiced by another.—(*Gen. vi.*) So Jesus crucified is now a mystical ark for us, and a place of refuge by his wounds. Let us enclose ourselves within them, and be there sheltered from the devil and the world. If we had continually before us the holy crucifix, how much more patient, humble, and mortified we should be? We should besides learn from Mary constancy in good. How many are there in the world who commence following Jesus by a more Christian life, and immediately abandon him to follow the world? Mary did not thus act: faithful and intrepid, she never abandoned him, although all others did, but she accompanied him to his last sigh: thus also did Jesus for us: he was importuned by the Jews to descend from the cross, and they would then believe him to be God: “*Descendat de cruce et credimus ei.*” The Redeemer, ever firm in his resolution, would never descend until after he breathed his last sigh.

THIRD POINT.

Mary was martyred by the love of man, which induced her to benefit him, even when her Son was being crucified.

To understand this point, suppose, as Rachel had two children, Joseph, and Benjamin, who was called the son of her grief: “*Filius doloris mei:*” so Mary had two children, namely, the Man-God and guilty man; she brought forth Jesus naturally in the

world: she reproduced the second spiritually to grace: the first, she brought forth in Bethlehem, without any pain: one being conceived without stain of original sin, is not subject to pain as other women: the second she reproduced on Calvary, suffering most acute pains, greater than those of childbirth, says Damascene. Mary on Calvary, seeing her Divine Son crucified for the faults of sinful man, who likewise was her son, felt her heart as it were rent in two; for she could not hate him who crucified her Jesus, and she also loved him and considered him as her son.

Such was the grief Eve felt in the terrestrial Paradise; when she saw her son Abel murdered by her son Cain; though the death of the innocent extremely displeased her, she could not hate the perfidious murderer, who was likewise her son. The heart of Mary was martyred by the love of man, that obliged her to love those who crucified her most beloved Son, consequently, they likewise crucified her to the very soul. Mary on Calvary, not only loved man, while he tore and murdered her Nazarean, but sovereignly benefited him, concurring to the great sacrifice which was offered for the redemption of the world. It is true, the Redeemer did not require the assistance of others to redeem man, his Divine blood being sufficient to save a thousand worlds; yet Mary wished to show her love for man, and the excessive desire she had for his salvation, by co-operating as much as she could in his redemption: as an intrepid priestess, she offered to the eternal Father, for the good of the

world, the sacrifice of the body of her Son, and the sacrifice of her dolorous soul.

As Adam and Eve both caused the ruin of the world, so did Jesus and Mary offer together the holocaust, one of the blood of his veins, the other the blood of her heart, namely, tears. Mary, on Calvary, pleaded for man with the Eternal Father, while the Redeemer, on the cross, prayed for those who crucified him. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Mary must also have prayed for them and for all sinners, as one who in all things was conformable to the sentiments of her Son; although she abhorred extremely the horrid deicide of the Jews, yet, contrary to her grief, she prayed also for them. She thus resembled the woman of Thecua, who, shrouded in a black mantle and shedding torrents of tears, spoke to king David in favour of Absalom, and for this purpose, she exposed to him the parable of two children one murdered by the other, "And behold the whole kindred rising, saith; Deliver him that hath slain his brother."—(2 *Kings* xiv., 7.) In the same manner, Mary spoke on Calvary in favour of man. "Ah! Eternal Father," might she say, "I am the mother of your only Son, and I am also the mother of sinful man, who, contrary to all laws of justice, impiously murdered my Divine Son; consequently, he merits eternal death; but should you thus punish him as he deserves, as an afflicted mother I shall be obliged to weep bitterly for the death of both. Deign to be moved with compassion at my grief; now that I sigh and suffer for the death of my Jesus, do not

permit me to grieve and lament for the eternal death of sinful man who is also my son." During this period, who can explain the interior martyrdom of the heart of Mary? St. Bernardine of Sienna, says: "She suffered as many grievous pains of parturition as there were innumerable men, whom she thus brought forth to grace."

Hence, we may draw many different affections towards our Lady of Dolours: first, of gratitude, giving her endless thanks for all she has done and suffered for us. On Calvary she conducted herself as a tender and compassionate mother: in bringing us forth again to grace, she suffered much more than mothers do in bringing their children to light. How much then are we obliged to her? Certainly, after Jesus, we owe most to Mary. We should then imagine that Jesus himself admonishes us with those words, which the ancient Tobias said to his youthful son (*Tobias* iv., 3): "Thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of her life," Why? Because you should ever remember how much labour and pains she suffered for love of you. Second, sorrow for our sins, which have afflicted and crucified Mary, by crucifying her only Son. The emperor Severus being dead, Herodias writes, that Anthony Caracalla and Geta, brothers, who remained heirs and equals in the empire, being unable to agree, at first thought of dividing the government between them: not succeeding in this attempt the impious Caracalla decided the suit with the sword, which he unsheathed, and ran towards Geta, who took refuge in the arms of his mother. Even there, the wretch barbarously

murdered him. The miserable parent remained but half alive, being transfixed with intense agony. Wretches that we are! we have acted in a similar manner by our sins, even with greater cruelty towards Mary, murdering and crucifying in her arms the Son of God. What is worse, we continually commit sin, and thus renew the first torment.

It is written of a youth devoted to our Lady of Dolours, that having committed a grievous sin, he went as usual to recite his devotions before an image of Mary of Dolours. He perceived her transfixed, not with seven, but with eight swords. Being astounded, he scarcely credited what he saw, when he heard a voice saying his sins added the eighth sword to the heart of Mary.—(*Revelation Fascett. di rose, par. iv.*) Miserable sinners that we are, who by the continual commission of sin, add every day a hundred and a thousand most acute swords to the most sweet heart of Mary. What confusion should we feel, and how many penitential tears should we shed.

The last affection, which is the principal fruit of this meditation, is, to try to console Mary in her misfortune; we shall do so, if throwing ourselves at her feet to embrace them, we ask pardon a thousand times for the bitterness we have occasioned her; above all, promising her never to relapse, by offending and crucifying her Son. A youth in India acted thus, of whom mention is made in the annual letters of the Society of Jesus: he had in his room a little statue of Mary of Dolours, with a sword transfixed in her heart. One day assailed by a

youthful passion, he resolved to yield against his conscience, which reminded him that he would thereby grievously offend God ; being blinded by passion, he went to the door of his room to execute his wicked purpose, when suddenly he heard a prodigious voice : " Stop ; whither are you going ? " He returned back, and saw the image of Mary of Dolours detach her arm from her side, snatch the sword from her heart, and then turning towards him, she said : " Here, take this sword, and wound me rather than my Son, by your sin." At these words, the youth, being stunned, fell to the ground, and with a torrent of tears begged of God and our Lady of Dolours pardon for his fault, promising her in future to lead an innocent and holy life. Ah ! sinful soul, if such you be who read these lines, imagine that Mary of Dolours also repeats to you : " Stop ; what are you doing ? It is already a long time, since by your evil habits you crucify my Son, and transfix me : have done. Oh ! if you are so cruel as not to cease your evil ways, transfix me rather than the only Son of my heart." Who then can be so hardened as not to be moved with these words ? Let us throw ourselves at the feet of our Lady of Dolours, and with hearts filled with the liveliest contrition, and with two rivulets of tears, let us thus address her : Ah ! most holy Virgin, if I had at my disposal the hearts of all mankind, I could not sufficiently compassionate your grief, which is dolour without measure and without example.

COLLOQUY.

Ah ! most dolorous Mary, how worthy are you of the liveliest compassion ! and how much reason have we to be indebted to you ? To have suffered so much for the love of the Eternal Father, and your Divine Son, was nothing worthy of astonishment, it being most just to conform to the Divine will ; but to wish to suffer so much for the love of mankind — we, who are so wicked, disloyal, and ungrateful, oh ! this, indeed, is a prodigy of your excessive goodness. Ah ! Mary, I would not dare appear before you, after having crucified your Divine Son by my sins, as a vile slave would not dare appear before a queen, after having murdered an only son, heir to the kingdom ; yet, you being constituted mother of all mankind in the person of John, and mother of mercy, we take the liberty of throwing ourselves at your feet, we embrace them a thousand times, and with tears in our eyes, we ask pardon for all the offences we have been guilty of towards you and your Divine Son. Forgive, O Mary, forgive ; have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. If you wish to punish us, do so, and transfix us with your sword of sorrow, and the pain will be dear to us, as it will render us more compassionate towards your sufferings. Do not permit that we should be ungrateful to your love, and whilst you weep at the foot of the cross, grant that we may also weep through compassion for your dolours, and through grief for our sins : “*Eja mater, fons amoris, me sentire vim doloris fac, ut tecum lugeam.*” Finally, now that

you assist at the agonies of your Divine Son, grant us the grace, although your most unworthy children, to be assisted by you in our agony and death. Amen.

MEDITATION XX.

On Paradise.

INTRODUCTION.

WE began the Exercises by meditating on the end for which we were created—to see, love, and enjoy God in Paradise. We end them by meditating on that same Paradise, in which we are to see, love, and enjoy God. A great thought and one well calculated to make us confirm, and as it were seal all the resolutions already made in the former meditations. No stimulant more powerful to the heart of man to induce him to endure great labour, than the hope of an extensive reward. The Israelites sustained so disastrous and tedious a journey through the deserts of Arabia during forty years—why? From their expectation finally to arrive at the promised land. Those mysterious animals mentioned in *Ezechiel* (i., 22), that were drawing the chariot of the glory of God, ran through the air with velocity, like thunderbolts; for they had on their heads an image of the firmament. How much more will the thought of Paradise animate us to suffer in this life, and to run in the road of Christian perfection! St. Ignatius was never satisfied with looking at the heavens, hence, in the summer nights he remained entire hours with his eyes fixed on the firmament. After

having long contemplated that most beautiful azure in the sphere, and those stars so bright and vivid, turning to look on the earth, which is so dense, thorny, and deformed, he burst into this heroic lamentation: "Oh! how vile the earth appears to me, when I contemplate Heaven!" In Rome this sign was given to recognise St. Ignatius: "He who is always looking up to Heaven, and who speaks continually of God."

Let us then also raise our eyes from the filth of this miserable earth, and consider Heaven, contemplating Paradise as well as it is possible.

We shall divide this meditation into three points. We shall consider in the blessed—1. The Paradise of the senses. 2. The Paradise of the soul. 3. The Paradise of eternity.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Imagine you see Paradise, and suppose what you know to be best:—A most luminous city, as if enlightened by a thousand suns: streets of sapphire; entire habitations of diamonds; the air perfumed with a thousand odours; most harmonious music; and similar delights. This description is not Paradise: it is but a shadow compared to Paradise.

SECOND PRELUDE.

Say to God from your heart, with holy David: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that I may dwell in his house all the days of my life."—(*Psalm* xxii., 6.) My God! this is the sole most important grace I beg of you, that you conduct me to Para-

dise; if you will not grant me other graces, I am contented; but I wish for Paradise; you purchased it for me by your blood, and I desire it.

FIRST POINT.

The Paradise of the Senses.

That what is said of Paradise may not appear exaggerated, but be considered, as in reality it is, much less than the reality, it is desirable to discourse with the intellect on the clearest reasons, which show Paradise to be superior to every human understanding. The first reason is from St. Bernard: "Raise your eyes," says the saint, "and consider Heaven. O what brilliant stars! What luminous planets! What beautiful azure! What is it we see? It is what is under the pavement of Paradise; what then is the pavement? and the place itself where the blessed are, and where God dwells, what must it be?" Rupert the Abbot (*l. 6, de Hom. Fili. dei*), says: "Paradise is called the Heaven of our Heaven." The second reason is from St. Augustine, who says: "Turn your eyes around the universe; what a fine world this is! What delights therein! How many seas, rivers, mountains, mines, plants, flowers, cattle, birds, and fish? It is such, that men would never wish to die, nor to quit it. Yet, what is all this world compared with Paradise? It is a prison, an exile, a valley of tears. For whom did God make this world? He made it, not only for the habitation of men, but also for beasts, serpents, and dragons. He made it not only as a shelter for his friends the just, but for his enemies, schismatics,

heretics, Turks. Paradise is not a prison, but a place of freedom ; not an exile, but a home ; not a valley of tears, but a place of pleasures, purposely and solely made for the dear friends of God. What then will it be ? How beautiful, how rich, how delightful ! If you were conducted to see the kingdom of a great king, and having scarcely entered the palace gates, you were introduced into the stable, and there beheld statues of porphory, engravings on ivory, Dutch tapestry, exquisite paintings, what would you exclaim ? If the stable of this king is so admirable, what must be the drawing-room, the galleries, the chamber of the same king ? This world then, which is also inhabited by beasts, considered with regard to Paradise, is as a stable, yet is so noble and delightful. Paradise, which is the kingdom of the saints, of Mary, and of God himself, who is the Monarch of monarchs, what will it be ?

The third reason may be drawn from two similitudes : 1. Imagine a king with immense treasures, a most skilful architect, quite occupied in constructing a palace for himself, and in selecting courtiers, surpassing all ever before seen in the world. What a palace would this be ? God then is King of kings, of infinite power, who can do as he pleases : of infinite wisdom, who can do what he wishes ; and of infinite goodness, in rewarding his servants in Paradise : which being supposed, what must Paradise be ? Second similitude : If a most skilful jeweller, who had a hundred thousand crowns at his disposal, were presented with a jewel by a peasant, and were to say : " This jewel is beyond all price ; I wish to

purchase it, nevertheless. I will give you for it my whole fortune of a hundred thousand crowns;" how valuable would not that jewel be considered? Paradise was sold by Adam to the demon for an apple. Jesus Christ, who has the greatest knowledge of Paradise, thought well to purchase it by shedding all his blood, which is of infinite value. How great then can Paradise be said to be?

4. In hell, God chastises his enemies much less than they merit: "Citra condignum;" yet gives them excessive and indescribable torments; on the contrary, in Paradise, he rewards the just with much greater pleasures than they merit: "Ultra condignum." What enjoyments then must these be?

5. Finally, Cæsar Arelatensis (*Hom. viii., de Pasch.*) says: "Observe how much the devil does and labours to rob men of Paradise!" The devil, then, having first been in that most happy place, envying man his happy lot in being able to go there, while he uses so many efforts to prevent him, clearly gives to understand that it is a habitation of sovereign delights, and to be sovereignly esteemed.

All this being admitted, let us now meditate the point proposed, and before any other, let us consider, *the first entrance of a soul into Heaven*. O God! what joy, what jubilation is hers? Scarcely has she seen herself raised above the stars, than turning her eyes around to the world she has left, she exclaims: "Blessed be God, that I am no longer subject to human miseries, sickness, pains, tempests, thunderbolts, plagues, wars, lawsuits, death; these are no longer for me. Blessed be God, I am already

secure of my eternal salvation, I do not fear ever to be lost. What pleasure for Noe, when having saved himself with his family in the Ark, he thence saw, while he was secure, that the whole world was inundated? What pleasure for the soul already saved, to be free from all those anxious solitudes that mankind have for salvation? Then the blessed will come before her to receive her and to congratulate with her, also her parents and friends who are saved, and those souls who were freed from Purgatory by her suffrages; above all, with what joy will her angel-guardian come to meet her? Welcoming her tenderly, he will express: "Come with me, beautiful soul, who so well profited of my direction and guidance: blessed be whatever I have done for you." Thus the soul is introduced into that blessed country of the living. How overpowered she will be at first seeing the greatness which is immeasurable. St. Bernadine of Sienna said (*Ser. de dign., art. i., cap. 1*): "That if God created as many worlds as there are grains of sand in the sea, they could scarcely be equal to the immensity of the highest Heaven." The farther she advances in that blessed mansion, she will the more be astounded, seeing that at every step she treads on sapphire; at every look, she sees a new prospect; at every respiration, she breathes a balsamic breeze of a thousand odours.

Finally, having arrived at the throne of God, she will experience much more than what happened to the queen of Saba, who, approaching king Solomon, seeing him seated on a throne of gold, as a little

god of the earth, and as it were a sun surrounded by a thousand planets of most noble courtiers, she in amazement lost her breath: "She had no longer any spirit in her."—(3 *Kings* x., 5.) So the soul considering the most august Trinity, amidst the effulgence of a thousand suns, surrounded by innumerable choirs of angels, will remain confused and overpowered with astonishment. What enjoyment then will it be for the blessed, seeing themselves invested with the rays of the Divine Sun, and transformed into its likeness? "Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory?"—(*Phil.* iii., 21.) This is a great mystery, says the apostle St. Paul. "We shall all indeed rise again."—(1 *Cor.* xv., 51.) All the dead at their resurrection will be changed in Paradise from what they were; they will be changed as to life, not as to fate; they will be so by nature, not by glory, insomuch, that all their senses will become glorious and beautiful, according to the sufferings they sustained in life for God. Those eyes that were so modest, and shed so many penitential tears, will appear like two stars, and will be recreated with the sight of the saints and angels, of Mary, and of the glorious humanity of Christ, whose sacred wounds the blessed can embrace, and approach his glorious feet even better than Magdalen. "Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word."—(*Luke* x., 39.) The abbot Silvan having once had a glimpse of Paradise, said: "May my eyes be for ever closed, not to behold anything created." What then will it be to a blessed soul

who can consider Paradise unceasingly and unveiled? The hearing, which was heretofore mortified by refusing to listen to murmurings and to indelicate songs, will be refreshed with most sweet and angelic melodies. St. Francis of Assisium having once heard, for a very short space, the sound of an angelic instrument, was suddenly caught in rapturous ecstasy, What then will it be to hear the harmonious concerts of innumerable angels?

The scent will be continually consoled with a thousand odours. Every blessed soul will appear a lively perfume of odours.

The palate, formerly afflicted with fasts and abstinence, will taste the most exquisite flavours united. Suarez says; "God will produce in the palate of each of the blessed a quality, which, much better than manna, contains in itself all flavours."

Finally, the feeling will be glorified with the four gifts of beatitude—namely, with agility, by which it can in an instant descend from the height of Heaven on Earth. By brightness, each blessed soul is so much more luminous than the sun, as the monarch of day is brighter than any celestial body, which St. Augustine attests. (*Tr.* 46.) By subtilty a blessed soul can penetrate a mountain without breaking it, similar to a ray passing through a crystal. By impassibility the blessed soul, become an immortal lover, can never more suffer, complain, or die.

In Heaven there will be, besides enjoyments common to all, also special rewards for particular pains sustained for God during life. If the Lord willed, even in this world, that the hair of Magdalene

which wiped the feet of Christ, should remain incorrupt—the tongue of St. Anthony of Padua, which propagated the glory of God, should be incorrupt—the charitable hand of St. Edward incorrupt; how much more will he glorify those same members in Heaven!

St. Augustine adds: "If God has rendered so glorious and so prodigious on earth the instruments of punishment of the saints, as the chains of St. Peter, and the scourges of many confessors, what will he not do for the saints in Heaven?" All these pleasures the blessed enjoy together at the same time. It is not so with earthly pleasures; he who reposes does not enjoy theatres: he who dances does not enjoy banquets, and so forth. "In Heaven," says Boëtius, "there is every good at the same time." The blessed enjoy all flavours, odours, harmony, all happiness, the quintessence of all good at the same time; as the prophet Joel says: "The mountains shall drop down sweetness."—(iii., 18.) Every drop of those celestial delights is such, that if it fell into Hell, it would immediately soften that great sea of most bitter pains. St. Augustine attests it.—(*Ser. viii.*) The rich glutton begged of Abraham one sole drop of celestial refreshment.—(*Luke xvi., 21.*) He knew that one sole drop of celestial sweetness could give him that relief in his cruel burning which all the waters of the sea could not effect.

Reflect then, O beloved! Is it not of faith that in Paradise all delights and pleasures are contained, even for the senses of the body? How then does it happen, that you who are so solicitous for pleasures and

pastimes, do not wish for them? The vile and brief enjoyments of the world ravish you; and the eternal and inexpressible content of Paradise does not gain your affections and desires? What does this mean? Have more sense! if you wish for enjoyments, seek them; but let them be celestial and immortal. You are contented to suffer inconveniences and expense in order to enjoy the pastimes of earth; to attain eternal beatitude, it is not much to suffer something for God. You would wish to enjoy two Heavens, one on earth, the other in Paradise; this is impossible: be contented then to suffer a little here, to rejoice eternally in Heaven.

Similar sentiments animated the youngest brother of St. Bernard, named Nivardo. His numerous brothers having become religious at Clairvaux, said to him: "Dear little Nivardo, you will be the sole inheritor of all our worldly substance; remain in the world for the relief of our father, as the sole germ of our progeny." The wise child shaking his head, answered: "Oh no! amongst brothers, portions should be equally divided; how then do you wish to gain Heaven for yourselves, and leave earth for me? The division is not just: if you wish for heaven, I desire it also." He accompanied them to Clairvaux. How wisely did this child speak? Many, though advanced in years, speak like children. How many Christians do not mind Heaven, provided they enjoy the pleasures of the earth? Rather than bear the slight yoke of Jesus Christ, they renounce Paradise.

SECOND POINT.

THE PARADISE OF THE SOUL.

How great soever the happiness of the senses, the soul is incapable of showing it; not being created for it, it cannot fully satiate it.

The Paradise of Paradise, as St. Augustine mentions, is God himself, seen and enjoyed unveiled by the soul. St. Anselm observes, he is so vast an ocean of enjoyment, that the soul cannot comprehend how it enters and emerges itself in felicity: as a fish in the sea is surrounded on all sides by water, so the blessed soul, immersed in the happiness of God, which absorbs him, finds in all his powers and in everything inexpressible enjoyment. Great will be the enjoyment of the memory, by recollecting the benefits conferred by God, especially the order and thread of predestination, and the manner by which providence rendered assistance efficacious without prejudice to liberty.

Remembering what was done and suffered in the world for the love of God, the martyrs recollecting their torments, the confessors their penances, the virgins the strictness of their cloisters: "Ah! blessed be God," will they exclaim, "who gave us strength and light to suffer those pains, which gained for us so beautiful a Paradise. Blessed prayers, blessed fasts, blessed alms, blessed be that day in which we turned our backs to the world, to follow more closely the example of the Redeemer." The intellect will be in enjoyment, because the most ignorant being saved, will know in Heaven in one moment all sciences more than all the wise of this world: but,

much more, as it will see God, the infinite beauty, unveiled : this is so great happiness, that theologians agree, that beatitude consists in the sight of God : this vision is an infinite good, its object being infinite in perfection. If the eye is pleased in seeing a theatre splendidly adorned, or a king arrayed in the most pompous appearance of majesty and glory, what will it be to see God himself through the lights of a thousand incomprehensible suns of infinite majesty, who has immutability for his throne—omnipotence for sceptre—eternity for crown—glory for mantle—the hierarchies of innumerable angels for suite? What then will it be to see in one glimpse, all good reunited in God, who is, as St. Augustine says: “Unum bonum omni bono bonum?” What will it be to see the most august Trinity, and in the Trinity an essence, which, participated by many persons, is undivided, and the distinction of three persons that do not swerve from the identity of one nature, the perfections enjoyed, “ad intra,” the perfections communicated “ad extra?” Add to this, that to see God, is not like seeing any created good, for those who see a king, do not, consequently, become equally kings : he who sees a banquet, does not become satiated ; but he who sees unveiled the greatness of God, becomes great ; he who sees his riches, becomes rich ; he who sees his felicity, likewise becomes happy ; he who sees his divinity, becomes also divine : “We shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is.”—(1 John iii., 2.)

As the sun, investing with its rays a dewy cloud, transfuses into it its own image and makes it appear

similar to it, so God, unveiled and enjoyed by the blessed souls, communicates to them the Divine perfections, and causes them to appear in heaven almost as God. O what happiness ! What content ! What glory !

Finally, great will be the pleasure enjoyed by the will ; for in loving God, the last end will be possessed, which includes all goods, so that all wishes will be fully satisfied. In this world no one possesses so much that he does not wish to enjoy still more. What could be desired more by David, than to pass from the rustic state of shepherd to that of King of Palestine ? Yet, not being contented, he said : “ I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear.”—(*Ps. xvi., 15.*) The will then of the blessed, having exterminated all desires, will be dilated in heaven beyond its wishes : it will find all wishes superabundantly satiated in God, who is a sea of infinite perfections. What felicity then for the soul to have all its wishes ?

Herodotus relates of Cræsus, King of Lydia, (*l. vi., Sabel, l. 3.*) that wishing to show gratitude to Alcmeone, who had graciously received his ambassador, he introduced him into an extensive gallery, in which his immense treasure were placed, and gave him permission to take as much as he could by himself. Alcmeone, being in great delight and solicitude, took with both hands whatever he found most precious, filled his pockets and loaded himself with gold and jewels. Ah ! how much happier is the lot of the blessed, who not alone once, but continually and always can treat with God, who is an inexhaustible treasure of all goods that can be desired : to

possess him, no fatigues nor sufferings are to be undergone ; like Alcmeone, it suffices to will it.

If a man on earth had a ring gifted with this virtue, that solely by touching it, he could have what he desired : for example, if he wished for wealth, he touches the ring, and immediately he sees before him a mountain of gold : he desires dainties, he touches the ring, and instantly a banquet appears before him. What a fortunate man, and how much he would be envied by all ! Ah ! my soul, if you are saved, how much happier will you be in Heaven ! To have there what you wish, you will not have to endure the slightest inconvenience, as it would be to touch a ring ; it only suffices to will it for you to possess it. You will scarcely have desired music, honours, perfumes, or riches, and already you will have enjoyed them superabundantly. Is not this a pleasure, a contentment, an inexpressible felicity ? What wonder then if Giles, of the seraphic order, was raised in an ecstasy, contemplating such great beatitude : even the sole name of Paradise being mentioned to him, he was subject to similar elevations. Children at Perugia having remarked this circumstance, when he walked through the city ran behind him, crying out : “ Brother Giles, Paradise ! ” Immediately he was wrapt on high towards heaven, to the wonder of all.

Dearly beloved, does not the sole thought of these celestial delights animate your fancy ? The sole hope of one day attaining by the Divine grace such felicity, does it not console you ? What then will it be, says St. Augustine, to possess it ? Know then

that God has created this beautiful Paradise purposely for you, and has also promised it to you, if you really wish it. Tell me then candidly, do you wish for Paradise or not? "If I wish for it?" "I do certainly." So, says St. Augustine, all respond to the prophet, who interrogates: "Who is the man that desireth life; who loveth to see good days: who wishes for Paradise?"—(*Psalms xxxiii.*, 13.) Immediately every one answers; "I wish for it." If it be so, be joyful, Paradise is yours. If you are poor, that does not signify; to go to Paradise, riches are not wanted. If you are ignobly descended, it is of no consequence: to go to Paradise nobility is not required. If you are ignorant it is of no avail; to go to Paradise, science is not necessary. What is solely required is the will, which is in the power of every one: "All you that thirst, come to the waters, and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat."—(*Isaias lv.*, 1.) Here is to be noted the strange method of speaking of the prophet: "Come and buy Paradise, without money." If money be not required, it is no longer a purchase, but a gift.

Nazianzen resolves the doubt, saying (*Or.*, xxv.): "Even without money, Paradise is purchased, for God holds in account the sole will, the sole desire of man." The will then of man is true and efficacious, when he uses means to attain the end, and the means for obtaining Paradise is the observance of the divine precepts: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Many at the sole mention of the observance of the divine precepts, immediately show repugnance, and their works contradict their

expressed desire for Paradise, Oh! what a shame, exclaims St. Augustine, full of zeal; how ridiculous! would men expect to be carried by the hair of the head to Heaven, by an angel, as Habacuc was borne through the air? This is folly. If we really wish for Paradise, while God assists us to it by his grace, we should also assist ourselves by holy works.

THIRD POINT,

The Paradise of eternity

Paradise is such, says St. Augustine (*l. iii., de lib. arbit.*, 25), and enriched with so many delights, that to enjoy it for one sole day and not more, it would well deserve to pass innumerable years in this life in suffering and in the privation of all temporal pleasures.

It appears that the prophet asserts this: "Better is one day in thy courts above thousands."—(*Psalms*, lxxxiii., 11.) What then will it be to add, not for one day, or only for one year or one century, but for innumerable centuries, for all eternity? Oh, what an addition! This causes Paradise and its goods to be true: according to the maxim of St. Augustine, there is no true good if it be not eternal: the goods of this world cannot be true, because they all end. Whether one be king of most flourishing dominions, the certainty of his kingdom finishing much sooner than a century, and the fear of losing it every instant, either by sudden death, or from an assault of an enemy, prevents him from being completely happy so long as he reigns: this was alluded to in

the acute reply given by an ambassador of Pyrrhus, monarch of Epirus. Having gone to Rome while it was at the zenith of its greatness, he could not satiate himself in admiring the splendid architecture and the prodigious works of art in that illustrious metropolis: one day some of the noblemen who paid him court, enjoying the praises given to their country by a stranger, proposed this question: "Have you found any defect in this city?" "Yes," answered the ambassador, "I observe a very great one." "What is it?" "In Rome also persons die." This statesman wished to signify, that how great soever was Roman felicity, for all, however, it should terminate, which cannot be said of the celestial Jerusalem: whence were expelled for ever death and sickness (*Apoc. xxi., 4*). The inhabitants of Heaven will be like so many stars, fixed in a perpetual and interminable eternity: "They shall shine as stars for all eternity."—(*Daniel xii., 3.*) The duration of their reign will not be for the space of a century alone, but for all centuries: "I will praise thy name for ever, yea for ever and ever."—(*Ps. cxliv., 2.*) The permanence of those blessed spirits will always be staple and firm, as the prophet says: "Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem."—(*Ps. cxi., 2.*) What great contentment will every blessed soul experience, at every instant, from the knowledge of his most happy eternity! He will say within himself: "Then these excessive delights will never have an end? Never. This glory then I never can lose: no one can ever prevent it, or take it away from me? Never. This great loving God,

who makes Paradise for me, I am always to enjoy, to see, to love? Always, Oh! what happiness! In addition, this most blessed eternity will always be without diminution, annoyance, or a rival.

1. The soul will always be the same, without ever diminishing the first beatitude, because God will always be enjoyed, infinite in beauty and perfections, and the blessed who enjoy him, will always be in the grace of God, without ever being able to lose it.

2. Without annoyance: here below, the most harmonious music, the most exquisite food, and the most agreeable works, if prolonged, immediately annoy and give more pain than enjoyment: although the pleasures of Heaven last eternally, they not only do not annoy, but even appear new, as if they were only beginning; hence it is said, that the angels in Heaven will always chaunt new canticles, not because their hymns will be always new, but they will always appear so.

3. Without a rival: here below greatness and honours are occasionally subjects of envy, rivalry, and persecutions. If a person could live even for one year in a city, peopled only by the just and impeccable, what great felicity would this be? It would be the sojourn of charity and peace; the inequality of citizens would not occasion discord, reciprocal love would cause each to recognise as his own the good of others. The blessed, not only for a year alone, but for ever, inhabit a city solely peopled by the just and impeccable, without fear that in that holy company there should arise division or discord. O what incomparable beatitude! What in-

expressible content ! It is such, says the learned Scotus, that none of the blessed, who occupy the last places in Paradise, would leave it, even to be the greatest monarch in the world. (*Scot. in IV.*, liii., q. 3):

The better to understand this, imagine that a holy man, a Thaumaturgus, seeing the corpse of a peasant, whose soul is already in Paradise, raises his hand on the bier, and with an imperious voice, says : " In the name of God, let the soul be restored to the body ; let him come to life, not to be, as he was, a mendicant, but to be monarch of the entire world." Would you believe it ? That soul, already saved in Heaven, would make the most bitter lamentations, and could not be induced to leave the last post in Heaven for the greatest throne on earth.

If it be so, O souls whose affections are buried in the filth of this miserable earth, raise your eyes and consider Paradise. Remember that God formed man for this end, with the head upwards, that he might easily look up to Heaven. The view of Heaven enkindles our hope, and strengthens our weakness in suffering : " Lo ! this was our hope."— (*Isa. xxi.*, 6.) St. Ambrose says : " The hope of reward takes away every pain from labour." If Paradise were nothing more than what we have meditated, would it not merit that every labour should be borne for its acquisition ? how much more then does it deserve it, being incomparably greater than what has been said ? Suppose this proposition were made : " If for one year you do not offend mortally, you shall become King of Spain." What

fool would be induced to sin, and thus lose a kingdom? Here is offered, then, to those who do not commit sin, an eternal kingdom, and yet not only is sin committed; but committed for every slight occasion. O God! what a folly. How rash soever a gamester be, before he ventures a large sum of money in play, he stops to think of the risk he runs: yet so many for every little caprice, seem by their deeds to say: Begone, Paradise, begone, Paradise. Ah! stop to consider what you say and what you do. In order to gain Paradise for us, Jesus Christ spent his thoughts and shed his blood on a cross; and we, in order to gain Paradise for *ourselves*, will not overcome a passion. Let us remove those affections which keep us tied to the earth, and prevent us from flying towards Heaven. Herodotus relates of Egisistratus Eleo, that being tied by the Lacedæmonians with a chain to his foot, he cut off the foot with his own hand to set himself free. Let us do as much, but in a better way: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee; cut it off and cast it from thee." If the hand be inclined to stealth, or the foot to walk in evil ways, let it be curbed for the love of God; for to acquire Paradise, whatever is done or suffered is little or nothing.

COLLOQUY.

Ah! be thou a thousand times blessed, my good God, to have made for your faithful servants so beautiful a Paradise. Blessed be your wisdom, which has formed it in so noble a manner. Blessed

be your omnipotence, which has constructed it so deliciously. Blessed be your charity, which has formed it purposely for us. "Possess the kingdom which was prepared for you from the beginning of the world." We having lost it by the sin of Adam, you have purchased it for us by the shedding of all your blood. Ah! be then a thousand times blessed, my good God. I call to bless and praise you, all angels and creatures. "Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord; praise and exalt him for ever." Yet know, above all the other delights of Paradise, I desire most ardently to see, to love, and to enjoy you. The sole thought of this makes me languish and faint in spirit. "*Concupiscit et deficit anima mea in atriis Domini.*" "My soul desires and languishes for the halls of the Lord"—(*Ps. xxxiii.*)! for you alone, infinite goodness, can satisfy my desires. "*Abyssus abyssum invocat.*"—(*Ps. xli., 8.*) My heart, which is an abyss of capacity in power, sighs after you, who are an abyss of capacity in essence. "Anima," I say with St. Antoninus, "*quæ est infinitæ capacitatis in potentia, invocat Deum infinitæ capacitatis in essentia.*"

I am, O my God, an unfortunate exile in this world; for we have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come. Oh! let me join the beautiful country of the living; conduct me to eternal life. I am a pilgrim, and have lost my way to Heaven, strayed by my passions. Oh! place me in the right way. "Show me thy ways, O Lord." I am as a vessel in the tempestuous sea of this world, which is steering towards eternity: "*Hominessicut naves,*"

"Men are like ships."—(*Ezech. xxvi.*, 25.) Oh! grant that I may arrive at the port of beatitude.

It is true—oh! how it pains me to think of it!—it is true that I have little merited this Paradise by my sins; but it is likewise true that you have purchased it for me with your blood; so that it has occurred as Chrysologus remarks: "Ante Christum etiam Abraham apud inferos, post Christum etiam latro in Paradiso:" "Before Christ, even Abraham was in Hell, (i. e., of the blessed or Limbo,) after Christ, even the thief is in Paradise." You have said, that in Heaven there are distinct places for every condition of persons. "In my Father's house there are many mansions."—(*John xiv.*, 2.) So that, if I cannot find a place among the innocent and the martyrs, or the virgins, admit me among the penitent sinners, my equals. "Qui Mariam absolvisti, et latronem exaudisti, mihi quoque spem dedisti?" "Thou who didst absolve Mary, and hear the robber's prayer, hast given hope to me also." Ah! do so, my God, through the bowels of your infinite mercy. If you do not wish to grant me other temporal graces, act as you please; but Paradise I wish for absolutely. I wish it not through my merits, for I have them not; but through the merits of your Divine blood. "One thing I have asked of the Lord, and this I will seek—to inhabit the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Amen.

MEDITATION XXI.

On the love of God.

INTRODUCTION.

THE words which God said to the prophet *Isaias* are very mysterious. *Isaias*, said he, chase away that people, who are at the same time blinder than a mole, yet provided with more acute eyes than the eagle. "Eaue populum cæcum et oculos habentem?" "Send forth a people who are blind and have eyes."—(*Isa. xlii.*, 16.) Thus, at the same time can one be blind and vigilant? Ah! the word of God, who is infallible truth, can never fail. There lived in those times, as well as in our days, unfortunately, a similar description of persons, who are at once blind to the Creator and clear-sighted for creatures: blind to the knowledge of the true good—that is God; and clear-sighted to mind any earthly beauty, although frail and defective. Ah! begone! such monstrous persons do not deserve to be with true Christians. To such, the demon appears to have acted in the same manner as the Ammonites, when they threatened to remove the right eyes from the besiegers of *Galaad*.—(*1 Kings xi.*, 2.)

It appears that worldlings have not the right eye, to see God; but only the left, to see creatures. In the same manner as they have not eyes to contemplate the Divine goodness, they have not a heart to love him. Of this kind of people it can be said, that they are "become as a dove that is decoyed, not having a heart."—(*Osee vii.*, 11.) More stupid

than a stone, and colder than ice, they have not one affection for God : on the contrary, for the things of the world they are observed to be possessed, not alone of one heart, but of as many different hearts as there are objects they idolize. The greatest account is held of vile and fallacious earthly goods ; and of God, the increated good, there appears to be no esteem. This is exemplified in Judas the traitor: When he saw the ointment replenished for God by Magdalen, he held it for a prodigal exchange, which he valued at the considerable sum of three hundred pieces of money ; but when there was question of selling the Redeemer, he esteemed him so little, that he thought it well to betray him for the vile price of thirty pieces ! Oh ! what opposition ! what deplorable confusion ! Let us for the future labour to employ our affections with better economy, esteeming and loving God alone, and uniting ourselves to him by means of love, who is our last end.

Let us then earnestly contemplate the attributes of God, which render him infinitely amiable ; for, as St. Thomas says, (12, *qu.* 27, *ar.* 2,) “ as the sight of a beautiful object enkindles cupidity of sense, thus the contemplation of Divine goodness inflames our spirit with holy love.”

We shall divide this meditation into three points, in which we shall consider three most powerful motives to love God: 1. Because God is sovereignly amiable. 2: Because he is sovereignly loving and beneficent. 3. Because he is sovereignly desirous of being loved:

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine that the same happens to us as happened to St. Frances of Rome. The blessed Virgin visibly appeared to her, with the Divine Infant in her arms, and said: "Daughter, love him who has so much loved you." Let us suppose that Mary says also to each of us: "Ah! ungrateful and insensible man, learn at length to love a God who has so much loved you."

SECOND PRELUDE.

Let us beg of the Holy Spirit to inflame our hearts with his charity.

FIRST POINT.

We should love God, because he is sovereignly amiable.

It is certain that the object of love is goodness; and where goodness fails, love also is wanting: as fire becomes extinct without combustible matter. God, then, is a good, uniting in himself all goods. "I will show thee all good."—(*Exod. xxxiii.*, 19.) He unites them in himself, as the angelic doctor mentions, (*D. Th. l. I., contra Gen. i.*, 29,) with universality, fullness, and unity.

1. With universality. Creatures possess their own perfections, but not those of others: so that man has the being only of man, not that of an element, or a planet: but God, who is an ocean of all good, contains in himself alone all the good of man; of angels; planets; heavens, plants, flowers, precious stones; and he contains good purified from every imperfection, as the schools mention.

2. With plenitude. Other creatures possess goods with measure and limits; they have so much, and not more: but God contains them with excess of infinite advantage, so that he is every perfection in the abstract: thus we say an angel is good, but he is not goodness; he is rich, but not riches: great, but not greatness; whereas God is goodness itself, riches, and greatness. Because God is infinite in power, in one moment he can create a thousand worlds; because infinite in goodness, his sight alone beatifies innumerable spirits in heaven; because infinite in mercy, he even assumed human nature for man.

3. With unity. As all the divine attributes are indivisible in God, in man the soul is not the body; wisdom is not sanctity; and so of the rest. In God, all perfections are the same essence, with a thousand beautiful semblances to cause love. "Stop here, miserable lover of the world," says St. Augustine: "you go in search of beauty, riches, honours; seek them if you will; but not in the world, where everything is foul; seek them in God, where beauty, riches, and honours are real." God has dispensed beauty, strength, riches, to creatures. Oh! how much more beautiful, strong, and rich he is than they! If you see in a friend—I will say more, if you see in an enemy—any singular prerogative of wisdom, valour, comeliness, immediately your affections are entwined around him, and you cannot detach yourself from him. How then does it happen, that, every prerogative being in God, not only you do not attach yourself to him, but you rather disgust

and outrage him? Is it because in God all perfections being united and infinite, they should on this account cease to be amiable? What is there in the world, then, more amiable, for which you should cease to love God? If every good here below is vain, short, fallacious, treacherous, "who will you love if not God?" asks St. Augustine. You will say, it is true all perfections are united in God, and all are infinite; but not being well known by man they cannot be loved. How can this ever be said, for this end God having become man, and descended on earth purposely to be known by men? So long as God remained retired within himself, and did not speak but amidst the flames of Sinai, man could in a certain manner excuse himself from the knowledge of God; but since his birth in a stable, his conversation in the world for the period of thirty-three years, loading all with benefits, who can excuse himself and say he does not well know him? "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin: but now they have no excuse."—(*Jo.* xv., 26.) By his incarnation he became like unto us; so that resemblance, which usually engenders friendship, should persuade us to love him. He wished to treat familiarly with us, in order that we should be fascinated with his admirable prerogatives. He assumed the most lovely appearance amongst men, to gain their affections: he was the most beautiful of the children of men. His words were most gracious: insomuch that the disciple said: "Thou hast the words of eternal life."—(*John* vi., 69.) St. Bridget writes, that the Jews in their

greatest labours recurred to him for comfort, saying : " Let us go to the son of Mary to receive consolation." He was beneficent towards all : " He went about doing good, and healing all that were diseased." How many infirm, blind, and lame presented themselves ? He cured and consoled them, and never excluded any person, not even publicans and sinners. He was even murmured at for the benignity with which he condescended to dine with them. What more ? He assumed for us a thousand different forms, all most loving, alternately calling himself Lamb, Pastor, Father, Mother, Spouse, Nurse, or most meek King. All these powerful incentives, so well known and seen in Christ, did not suffice to enamour mankind with him. With this knowledge, how can any object but God ever be loved ? What appears incredible is daily seen in the world : relatives are loved, even though they be unkind ; friends also, though faithless ; companions, too, although traitors : but God is not loved. Creatures are loved, who have some slight participation of the Divine perfections ; but God, the fountain of all good, is not loved. What monstrous ingratitude !

St. Ambrose had great reason to wonder at the folly of Holofernes, when Judith coming before him with most pleasing countenance, to whom God had also added celestial beauty, he, without in the least minding her beautiful countenance, fixed his eyes on the sandals of her feet, and with these alone was enchanted.—(*Judith* xvi., 11.)

Oh ! how much greater is the folly of men, who never raise their eyes to Heaven to contemplate the

infinite beauty and goodness of God, but always keep them turned towards miserable creatures, as the same St. Ambrose says : they are like traces or footsteps of the Divinity : they thus show themselves to be very foolish, loving so much the traces, and not the Divinity who formed them.

My soul, enter into yourself, and consider how ill you have employed your affections, and weeping, say to God with St. Augustine : " There was a time in which I did not love you." Reflect that in loving the paltry goods of this world, you have also rendered yourself as vile as earth. " They became abominable, as those things were which they loved," —(*Osee ix., 10.*)

Remember the chastisement inflicted by God on the children of Aaron, Nadab and Abiu, who having put strange fire in their censers, fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord. (*Levit. x., 2.*) Why? Because they offered before the Lord strange fire. Ah ! you are wretched, if in your heart, in which should always burn the flames of Divine love, there should be placed the coals of infernal and profane love. What rigid chastisements may you justly fear from Divine justice?

SECOND POINT.

We should love God, because he is sovereignly loving and beneficent.

Holy David was in great amaze, reflecting that the God of infinite majesty should condescend so far as to remember man. (*Ps. lxxxv.*) " What is man that thou art mindful of him ?" If it be so great a

favour to have a place in the memory of God. and to be the object of his thoughts, what then will it be, to be honoured with his affections, to be the object of his love? It is certain that *Ecclesiasticus* (xlvi., 16,) could not make a greater eulogium of Samuel than to say: "He was the beloved of the Lord his God." How great a wonder is this, that God should deign to love man? The angelic doctor teaches, (1, 2, q. 27, a. 1,) that three causes are apt to conciliate love; namely, beauty, goodness, and resemblance; which of these things can be found in man? Not one. Where is beauty, if by sin he becomes blacker than a coal? Where is goodness, if he is full of malice and ingratitude? Certainly, no resemblance is to be seen in him, as God is a pure spirit, and man is material. God is light, man darkness. God is all, man nothing. Thus in man, there is nothing whatever that can conciliate the love of God; yet God loves him through the sole goodness of his most Divine heart. O infinite benignity! O ineffable charity! In loving us, God does not consider our demerits, but is solely moved by his own goodness. Oh! what a fund for thought! how powerful to make us languish and dissolve in charity!

Nyssen relates, that as he was walking for amusement he saw a sorrowful man absorbed in deep thought, who did nothing but weep most bitterly. Thinking he was afflicted for some unforeseen accident, he asked him why he wept; sighing profoundly, he answered: "I weep because, being but a miserable man and an impious creature, yet God loves

me: this thought transfixes my heart, and gives me every motive for weeping unceasingly." Ah! most just and sweet tears, why do you not also act the same on me, reflecting on this truth—God loves me? How much our Lord obliges and honours me. Who loves me? God: infinite majesty, who, contented with himself does not want any person. Whom does he love? He loves me: I am composed of clay, an ungrateful creature, who outrage and rebel against him. Why does he love me? Is it because he finds complacency in me according to his taste? Ah! no; for, on account of my crime, I am an odious object of his justice: he loves me solely on account of his incomprehensible goodness. My loving Jesus, tell me why do you love me so much? Why dying on the cross do you sigh and agonize for me? Why do you shed from your wounds five rivers of blood? Why do you die in so ignominious a manner, and so amorous with your arms extended and with your heart open? Why? St. Thomas of Villanova answers for Jesus: "In amore meo non tuam, sed meam inquiris utilitatem:" "In your love for me, you seek not thine but my advantage."—(*Conc. de S. Martha.*) Jesus loves me for no interest of his own, but for my pure good. He loves me to make me blessed with his love. O what benignity! Should I not love him in return? Can I refrain from loving him, to love a beauty that betrays me, an animal that flatters me? Can I refuse to correspond to so loving a God, my sole good and my last end? What stupidity would this be? What monstrous ingratitude:

Our God loves us not only on account of his great and amorous heart, but even by a kind of necessity, as every father loves his son, every artist his work, every gardener his plant; and we are his children and the work of his hands. According to the angelic doctor, there is a difference between human and Divine love: human love is not able to infuse good into others, by wishing well to the beings selected as the objects of love: it is not so with God: as he occasions in others the good which he loves, he is excited to love without any extrinsic motive!

He loves us *with his whole being*, because his love is God himself. St. Bernard says, (*ser. xv. :*) God loving us, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost love us. Omnipotence loves us, preserving what he created in us: immensity, being always present to us: wisdom governing us: and so of all his Divine attributes.

He loves us *more than all*: he has not done for angels what he has accomplished for man: he assumed human nature, and died on a cross for us: "For nowhere doth he take hold of the angels; but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold."—(*Hebr. ii., 6.*) He loves us with more affection than our own father: with more tenderness than our mother: he loves us more than ourselves: for God has done and suffered for us, what we neither do nor suffer for ourselves. St. Bonaventure ventured to say, that it appears in a manner as if he hated himself, to give us life. Finally, concludes the angelic doctor, (*ap. Commune, Ps. xxxvii.,*) he loves us as if we were so many gods greater than he. O what an excess! What a strange effect of infinite love!

He loves us *always* : his love towards us, is not only sovereign in intensity, but also in extent. He has loved us (*Ps. ciii., 17.,*) from eternity and unto eternity : he loved us before we existed : "With perpetual charity, I love thee." He continues to love us, even whilst we offend him, for he expects us to penance, and defers the chastisement of his justice : he acts with us, as David did with Absalom, when in rebellion he plotted his death, David procured to preserve his son's life.

Finally, his love does not end in words and in affections, but he *shows it by the facts of excessive beneficence.* Reflect, O man ! that what you are and what you have, all originated from God. Consider the heavens, earth, elements : all are benefits from God, which make us know that God has loved us, says St. Augustine, in order to enrich us with delights. God has shown us infinite beneficence : "And the heart fancieth."—(*Eccles. xxxiv., 6.*) Who could ever have imagined that a God should have become man for the love of man ? Yet God has done this for us, as St. Augustine says. Who could ever suppose that a God made bail for man, would wish to die for him, on a cross ? Yet God has done this for us. Who could ever have thought of the extraordinary invention by which, even after death, our Lord remains in the world, and in the august sacrifice of the Eucharist, continually renews the sacrifice of the cross ? He has done all this for us. Oh ! what obliging inventions, and what amorous fancies of Divine goodness ! Finally, consider the more particular benefits which God has conferred

on you more than others, with a most obliging partiality. How many are there in the world, poor, ignorant, infirm, persecuted; and you, on the contrary, are wealthy, educated, healthful, courted? What merit have you with God more than they? Rather, what demerit you have for your sins which those have not? God has acted towards you with so much more mercy than with them. How much more love then has God shown for you? How much more obliged are you, to love him in return?

Blessed Camilla Varani, Princess of the bed-chamber, then Sister Baptist, nun of St. Clare, for her illustrious virtues obtained this singular reward, that Jesus Christ once visibly appeared to her quite amiable and joyful, and opening his breast, showed her written in golden characters, in the midst of his Divine heart, these sweet words: "I love thee, Camilla."—(*Papebroch*, 18 May.) Oh! what a grace, what a subject of envy even to the seraphim! Each of us can well see in the heart of God, if not in golden characters as a countersign of great benefits, that he loves us sovereignly, constantly, and more than innumerable other creatures. If it be so, what do you do, my soul? exclaims St. Augustine. What a hard stone is your heart, if after so many benefits it does not show some spark of affection! When will you resolve to correspond well with so Divine a lover, and so great a benefactor? O yes, I am resolved, O most amiable and beloved Lord! I know, as St. Bernard says, it is true there is not in the world a love similar to yours: he exclaims with St. Thomas of Villanova; "O ecstatic exube-

rant love! O most fervent excess: without number, measure, weight, you loved me.”—(*Ser. de Transfix*)

THIRD POINT.

We should love God, because he is sovereignly desirous of being loved.

He is a God of so great majesty, and man is so vile in himself, that it would be great condescension on the part of God, if he only accepted the love of man; as it would be great condescension in a monarch, if he were contented, much more if he were pleased with being loved by a miserable peasant. God not only accepts and receives the love of man, but he wishes and desires it most ardently. St. Augustine meditating on this, with reason wonders much, saying: “O Lord, why should you be mindful of me? What advantage accrues to you from my love? Whence arises that anxiety for my perfidious and obstinate heart?” It is so great, that inasmuch as man is vile and wicked, God anxiously wishes for his love. Having created all creatures for man, he then created man solely for himself: as all creatures naturally love their centre, he wished that man should have a natural tendency to love God, his last end.

What more? He disdains not openly to beg of man his heart: “My son, give me thy heart.”—(*Prov. xxii., 26.*) He declares he will have it all, without being divided with others: to those who love him, he promises Paradise for a reward: “What things God hath prepared for those that love him”—(*1 Cor. ii., 9.*) He threatens eternal

death, as a chastisement to him who does not love him: "He that loveth not, abideth in death."—(1 *John* iii., 14.) He declares that the basis and the fulness of his law is, not to adore him, nor to fear him, but to love him: "Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law."—(*Rom.* xiii., 10.) He orders all sacrifices offered to him to be seasoned with salt: by salt is understood his love; "Whatsoever sacrifice thou offerest, thou shalt season it with salt."—(*Levit.* ii., 13.) If sometimes an unloving heart fly from him, he sweetly complains of it: "Their heart is far from me."—(*Isa.* xix., 13.)

Not contented with all this, finally, he commands his love by a rigorous precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart."

1. How much is here to be meditated on! When was there ever a necessity to command the love of what is good and beautiful? Why, then, is the sovereign good commanded to be loved? Ah! this happens through the blindness and perfidiousness of human nature.

2. If God had commanded us solely to fear him, and had prohibited us, as too daring an act, to love him, this would have been a very severe law to the heart of man inclined to love, and thus unable to love the sovereign good. One of the greatest pains of the damned is, contrary to inclination, to know that God is most amiable, and not to be able to love him. We are then much obliged to God, who has imposed on us what is so dear to our soul, namely, to love him.

3. This is an incomprehensible honour, in which

he may have holy emulation ; for God commanding us to love him, shows how much he appreciates our affection.

Finally, St. Augustine cannot understand (*l. 1., Conf., 10*), why God commands his love under so grievous pains, while the soul cannot endure greater pain nor greater misery, than not to love God : this being supposed, can we imagine more clear demonstrations to persuade us that God desires to be sovereignly loved by man ?

How is it possible that a man should not be excited to grant these ardent desires of God ? Earthly monarchs have no need to command, to obtain what they wish from their subjects ; it solely suffices that they show an inclination, all try to second it. O confusion of the world ! God alone appears to have this ill success with men, not to be obeyed by them, even when he commands. Moses struck a rock with his rod, and immediately it let forth water copiously. God with powerful benefits wounds the human heart, and it does not respond with one affection ! To the amaze of Oleastro, man alone denies to God what he asks him—namely, his love and his heart. What ? Is this precept of loving God too hard and too severe ? Certainly not ; there is nothing more natural to every creature than to love him by whom he is loved and benefited. The irrational lambs, among the bleatings of a hundred sheep, know the voice of their dam, and run after her. Even most cruel wolves and tigers love and caress their offspring. Is it then a precept which cannot be practised by all ? By no means. An in-

valid may well be excused from fasting; the poor, from almsgiving; but who can excuse himself from loving God? Why then should we not obey and execute so dear and obliging a command? Ah! man! ungrateful man, have you a heart to turn your back to God, who is so amiable and loving, to follow creatures that are nothing more than carrion? You have a very small heart, of which you wish to make a hundred partitions, and bestow one on relatives, another on friends, another on dress, and only reserve a little corner for God. But God is not contented with this most unjust division, for he expressly declares: "I am alone, and there is no other God besides me"—(*Deut. xxxii., 39*): he wishes to have our hearts entirely for himself: "with thy whole heart:" he will not suffer the slightest affection therein not referred to him.

COLLOQUY.

My good, most amiable, and beloved God; no, I would not wish to retain this frozen heart, but I should want the hearts of all the saints to correspond in some manner to the infinite love with which you have always loved me, and now love me, not only without any merit on my part, but with many and great demerits. As I cannot do more, I unite my poor affections with the love of all the blessed and the saints, and with them I exclaim: "Ah! be blessed a thousand times, and thanked for so much goodness towards a miserable creature such as I am. I protest that I owe this heart, although defective and stained, to you, for to you alone it be-

longs, by every title of justice and gratitude ; you alone being a sovereign and infinite good : for “Thou alone art holy, thou alone art Lord, thou alone art most high.” I know well that in giving you my heart, I bestow upon you but a small gift, therefore I exclaim with the fervent St. Philip Neri : “Ah! Lord, having to love a God of infinite goodness, why should I have but one heart, and that so small? “Deus, cum tu amabilis sis, et ita velis a nobis amari, cur dedisti nobis tantum unum cor, et hoc tam parvum?” What can I do to correspond with the love and benefits of God? Ah! holy spirit! you who filled the soul of Mary with charity, and the minds of the apostles, inflame also our hearts ; consume in them with your heavenly fire all profane love, that, as on the altars of the ancient Testament, the fire of charity may always burn there : “Ignis in altari meo semper ardebit.” Ah! Divine Spirit, be-moved to compassion towards me ; “Infunde amorem cordibus, infirma nostri pectoris virtute firmans perpeti :” that by thus loving God during life, we should afterwards love him for all eternity in Heaven. Amen.

MEDITATION XXII.

AND LAST.

AS A COMPLEMENT TO THE EXERCISES.

Of the spiritual fruit we should draw from the Exercises.

INTRODUCTION.

ST. JEROME, writing to the holy virgin Eustochium who, by means of his directions, after much time

and labour, had already arrived at great perfection, said to her: "Daughter, I admonish you not to allow the devil to despoil you of those treasures of virtues and merits, which with so much labour you have acquired. Remember that a traveller goes the more cautiously, and is more guarded against robbers, inasmuch as he is charged with gold and silver." The same advice I repeat to whoever has terminated the Exercises with fervour. I am persuaded he has in this holy time well known, by the Divine light, eternal truths: he has conceived strong desires to amend his life, and he has collected much merit from so many holy works already practised. What remains to be done? To preserve well what is already acquired, and strongly guard against the devils, who, like so many pirates, always have in view the ships most rich in merchandise: thus they attack with greater stratagem the most fervent souls, who are full of strong resolutions: they would wish them to lose in one day what they had gained in eight or ten.

Seneca thought entire centuries were wanting to bring a city to magnificence as to buildings, population and commerce; and to destroy it one day—one hour sufficed; a shock of an earthquake, a sacking by an enemy's army, a raging plague, in a very short time reduces it to nothing.

To place the mystical citadel of a soul in a state of Christian security, how much is wanting? how many sermons? how many meditations? how much retirement? how many resolutions? To destroy it—oh! how sorrowful!—a few moments suffice, a

perilous occasion, human respect, fear of what will be said. Let us now seriously think on the manner of preserving the good which is done, according to what the apostle advises: "Hold what thou hast." Let us draw from the holy Exercises practical and permanent fruit for our lives.

We shall divide this meditation into three points.

1. We must draw practical fruit from the exercises.
2. Permanent fruit.
3. Which are the means to draw these practical and permanent fruit.

FIRST PRELUDE.

Let us imagine we see our Redeemer after the prodigy of curing the invalid at the pond of Probatica; he reasons with him, and admonishes him thus: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." (*John* v., 14.) Let us suppose he says the same to each of us. Already in the Exercises, with penitential tears and exact confessions, you have been cured of the wounds of your sins; I admonish you not to return again, lest something worse happen, by relapsing into former faults.

SECOND PRELUDE.

We shall say to the Holy Ghost: Ah! Divine Spirit, you have given me light to know the eternal maxims; you have given me a desire to correspond with your lights: give me also efficacious graces to execute well your inspirations,

FIRST POINT,

We must draw practical fruit from the Exercises

The end for which the Exercises are made is to draw much fruit for the soul. The invalid takes remedies to restore lost health: man considers his countenance in a mirror to cleanse what is soiled, and to reinstate what is out of order; otherwise he is deficient in reason, if after having seen in the glass may deformities in his person, he does not think of removing them. Now, the Spiritual Exercises act for men the part of a very clear mirror, in which are seen by the light of Faith, all the deformities and irregularities of the soul.

What folly would it be, if, having well observed and known them for eight or ten days, a person should neglect to remove them? The apostle St. James preached with great zeal on this subject to his faithful: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass, for he beheld himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was." (*James i., 22.*) It cannot, however, be well known if this fruit has been derived, until the exercises shall have been terminated. As a bucket while in water cannot be declared sound or the contrary, until being removed from the well it shows whether it leaks: thus when many make the exercises together, it cannot be distinguished who profited, because all appear as to the exterior modest

and full of compunction: after the exercises it will be known if the lights received are put in practice, if the holy resolutions are followed, if a person live with more devotion and modesty, without ever returning to former disorders: We should endeavour to procure this practical fruit after the exercises, by every possible means and for numerous powerful motives.

1. Because we shall have to render a most strict account to God, for all the lights he has brought to our minds, for all the impulses he has given our hearts, for all the graces he has conferred on us at this period. After having shed on our souls so many showers of knowledge and fervent inspirations, if he saw from Heaven, that instead of producing flowers and fruits of holy works, we should show forth the thorns and briars of vices, ah! how indignant would he be? He would certainly act as a husbandman, who, after having for a long time watered and cultivated a plant, if he find that instead of bringing forth fruit, it becomes dry, he immediately curses and roots it up: "For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it—which bringeth forth thorns and briars, is reprobate and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt." —(*Hebrews vi., 7.*) Besides, we shall have to render an account to God for the repeated promises we have made him at this time to sin no more, and commence a new life; so, if after the exercises any one fail in word, and return to his former wickedness, what would not this outraged Lord say to him? Ah! perfidious and unfaithful creature, deceiver,

would he not say, is God thus treated? If once only you fail in word to another man similar to yourself, he considers himself highly offended? You have failed in word to a God of infinite majesty, not executing so many former promises, and you expect he should not be offended and not thunder at you! Remember the tears and sobs with which you asked pardon for the evil done. Remember the words you so often uttered: "Never more sin:" now, deceiver, you are precisely like the wicked, of whom Jeremias said (iii., 3): "Her treacherous sister Juda hath not returned to me with her whole heart, but with falsehood." How treacherous were your tears and how unfaithful your heart: "With their tongue they lied unto him: but their heart was not right with him."—(*Ps. lxxvii.*, 36.) The height of evil is that your false penance has added to former faults a still greater one, as St. Gregory writes of the impious Judas.

2. He who prevaricates after the exercises, renders himself more inexcusable than ever in his faults: a worldling who never considered in earnest the meaning of death or hell, or the terror of eternity, could have some appearance of excuse before God, saying, that, blinded by passion, he had never minded what certainly he ought to have done, namely, these maxims: but after he has long meditated upon them, and clearly known them in the exercises, can he allege that excuse? Certainly not, God, who is most just, would reprove him! What! After having seen the great abyss of sin and the horrible torments of hell, with your eyes open, and for a

momentary pleasure, you voluntarily precipitated yourself? What! After having known that God alone is your last end, and that all things else are vanity, yet of your own free will you have turned your back on God, to serve the world and the devil? Ah! how many, from one only of these thoughts have become saints, and you with so clear knowledge of eternal things, become worse than you were.

Ah! how many similar to you, if they had this spiritual assistance of the holy exercises, would change their life and become devoted to God? While you, more obdurate than a stone, do not yield to the strokes of divine inspirations: "Wo to thee, Corozain: wo to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes."—(*Mat. xi.*, 21.)

3. Finally, because these exercises may be the last in your life, after which death may come to you without thinking of it. In this case, how great an evil would it be to resume former evil habits, without hope of being able to amend by other spiritual exercises? They may be the last as regards certain efficacious assistances which God may not again bestow, if you should not have corresponded with those which he gave you in these. To understand this, suppose that a physician, after giving the mildest medicines, then the most efficacious and powerful, if he sees they are of no avail, that the patient, far from improving, becomes worse, then considering the case hopeless, he abandons him: "A long sickness is troublesome to the physician."—(*Eccl. x.*, 11.) Who can deny that the spiritual

exercises are amongst the most powerful and efficacious remedies to cure and convert souls? If God see that they are of no avail with obstinate hearts, what does he do? In anger he often punishes them, as he did infamous Babylon—namely, he abandons them, and never gives them the efficacious assistance of his grace, even though they should again return to the exercises. “We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed: let us forsake her.”—(*Jer. li., 9.*) The miserable creatures will return to implore the Divine mercy, but an angry God will not on this account be moved to compassionate them, well knowing their former irregularities. “Facta est indignatio magna a Domino exercituum.....sicut loquatus est, et non audierunt; sic clamabunt et non exaudiam, dicit Dominus:” “Then came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts.....as he spoke and they heard not, so they will cry and I shall not listen; sayeth the Lord.” (*Zach. 7., 13.*) What a great point! Reflect seriously on it; tremble from head to foot, and do not attempt to act towards God with so little respect as not to listen to his words, and show him such ingratitude, as not to execute what he has inspired you with for you good, and that you have promised him with so many tears.

SECOND POINT.

We must draw from the exercises permanent fruit.

They are not few, who, having terminated the exercises, show by their deeds that they have gathered much fruit: hence, they are more modest

in deportment ; more cautious in conversation ; more devout and frequent in approaching the holy sacraments ; but all this fine fruit lasts only a short time : as a vessel of water when on the fire boils and bubbles, and when removed, cools until it returns to its former cold state : thus they, who in the first fervour of the exercises, burned with holy desire of becoming saints, having left that retirement, by degrees grow tepid in their spiritual exercises, and then recommenced the first method of a free and disorderly life. Oh ! what a great irregularity is this ! and how frequently it occurs. The reproof could justly be made to them which the apostle gave to the Galatians, calling them senseless : “ Are you so foolish that whereas you began in the spirit, you would now be made perfect by the flesh ? ” — (*Gal. iii., 3.*) He adds, that not having followed the good commenced, they laboured in vain and without fruit ! The better to understand this, let us imagine that a merchant, after traversing the ocean for forty years, having braved furious tempests and encountered innumerable perils, finally, enriched with silver, gold, and most precious jewels, arrives in port ; but scarcely has he landed, when he commences gambling, and ventures at one sole game of dice all he had acquired by the labour of so many years. What would be said of him ? O foolish man ! what good accrued to him from having amassed so great riches during so many years, if he be contented to impoverish himself in one minute ? Such then is the case of those who, after having laboured much in the exercises, and even for some

time after endeavour to settle the affairs of the soul; yet, in one instant stake their salvation on a vile satisfaction. Ah! how miserable and blind they are, not only to render useless all the good works before performed, but by relapsing into former errors, to render themselves so much the more odious to God, that he says: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they had known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."—

(2 *Peter* ii., 21.) A similitude will clearly explain the case. If a soldier from the enemy be conducted prisoner before a captain who always waged war against him, he will grant him pardon freely. If, on the contrary, a soldier should be conducted before him who, after having received his pay for many years, and fought under his banner, having rebelled against him, took flight to combat in the enemy's army: oh! this traitor not only will not be pardoned, but will be punished by death for his felony. This is our case. If one who was wicked returns to penance, he obtains with ease pardon from God: after having for some time walked in the way of God and devotion, if he again rebel and give himself up to vice, oh! then he will be most severely chastised by God with eternal death. The Psalmist said so: "The enemies of the Lord have lied to him; and their time shall be for ever." O most terrible chastisement! O cruel threat! Grant then that the fruit of the exercises may be fruit worthy of true penance—namely, permanent and persevering fruit. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of penance."—(*Luke* iii., 8.)

Such was the penance of St. Peter, who repenting of his fault in denying his Divine Master, began to weep, and so long as he lived he never ceased weeping, insomuch that his continual tears caused two furrows in his face. Such was the penance of Magdalen, who at the first light of Divine grace darted on her mind, "she did not cease to kiss his feet:" during life, she never ceased to be faithful to Christ: at the death of the Saviour, all the disciples having fled, she remained firm at his sepulchre. To be silent on a thousand others, such was the penance of the famous Eudoxia, whose life was written by Geoffrey Henschenius of the Society of Jesus, (5 *March*.) She lived in Heliopolis, Phœnicia, under the empire of Trajan: she was an idolator, and on account of her extraordinary beauty, was reputed the most noted sinner of that city. Being converted to the faith and to reformation of manners by the zeal of Germanus, a most holy monk, she went to throw herself at the feet of Theodorus, bishop of Heliopolis, and received baptism from his hand: she then distributed her riches to the poor, and founded monasteries and hospitals: finally, she caused herself to be secretly conducted out of the city to a monastery of holy women, who lived in strict observance; she here gave herself up to so exemplary and perfect a life, that in a short time she was elected superioress. The devil envying her sanctity, solicited a youth named Philostratus, who had been one of her principal lovers, to make use of this insidious stratagem to induce her to return to the world. He went to the

abbot, Germanus, and feigning a desire to receive some good document from the holy penitent to become more fervent in spirit, he entreated so earnestly, and wept so bitterly, that he obtained leave for once to speak to Eudoxia. Having proceeded to her monastery, he had no sooner seen her in the parlour, pale and disfigured, wearing a rough tunic and covered with a crape veil, than he immediately began to weep through compassion for her : " Ah ! poor Eudoxia," said he to her, " how changed you are ! How can you lead this life ? I come in the name of all your friends, who await you, and are ready to bestow on you greater goods : your palace is still in good order ; in the purse which you see, there is as much gold as suffices to place you in your primitive splendour. Do act according to my injunctions ; quit this." What think you was the answer of the modest Eudoxia ? " Go in peace, soothe Divine justice, and commence a new life." Philostratus returned to the monastery of the blessed Germanus to do penance in earnest for his sins. O ! the conversion of Eudoxia was real, because it was constant ; as such she resisted the impulse of a passionate lover ; she even obtained miracles from God to assist her constancy.

The fruit of the exercises should be durable : whoever quits them to commence a more Christian life, should always continue it, until God rewards him in Heaven. We must have patience, until it please God to give us the reward of our labours. St. Augustine adds : " If God waited long for us to do penance, it is right that we, performing

long penance, should also wait for that period, in which God will consider it more suitable to remunerate us." Oh! how many of the damned weep in hell, who led good lives for a long time, but had not the patience to persevere. How unfortunate was Judas, who after having commenced well, finished with deicide. Think well on it, O beloved! reflect seriously, as St. Laurence Justinian says: "Perseverance alone is the gate of Paradise:" then, it imports as much to persevere, as to be saved.

THIRD POINT.

Which are the means to draw practical and permanent fruit from the Exercises?

There are numerous means which preserve durably the fruits of the exercises. It is well to consider the chief: 1. To break with one stroke the chain of our sins. "Thou shalt cry, and he shall say: Here I am. If thou wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee."—(*Isaias* lviii., 9.) Thus God spoke to the Israelites, who were fasting and performing great penance, yet continued to commit some grievous faults. God made them understand that they never could have peace with him, if they did not remove the last link of the long chain of their sins. Oh! how many, blinded by the devil, flatter themselves that they shall be able to reform their manners by degrees; thus they divest themselves of minor vices, but never overcome their ancient bad habits, nor their predominant passion. Herod, by the fervent exhortations of the Baptist, must have abstained from many vices, and practised many good

works : "For he heard him willingly, and did many things in consequence:" but because he would not deny himself the incestuous intercourse with Herodias, all the rest availed him nothing. Understand well, O beloved, it will be of no avail, after the exercises, to be very devout and exempt from other faults, if you preserve some sinful affection or hatred, if you do not immediately restore what you should to your neighbour. St. James says: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all."—(ii., 10.)

2. Most important means is to fly the occasions of sin. Holy David, desirous not to commit sins, earnestly begged of God to remove him from the way that conducts to iniquity: "Remove from me the way of iniquity."—(*Ps.* cxviii., 29.) Now, the way of sin is the occasion of sinning, which conducts man to do evil: the occasion then being removed, the sin also is prevented. If the occasion be not prevented, your resolutions, prayers, and penances will not secure you. The epithet Chrysologus gives to those occasions (*ser.* cxvi.) is very expressive, he calls them smouldering "fumantes occasiones." Have you observed a light not well extinguished? What smoke comes from it? If a small light approach even at a distance, it immediately rekindles; the same happens frequently among men: it appears that by means of the exercises and of sacramental confession, the fire of impure passion should be extinguished; yet all evil inclinations remaining alive, the memory of past pleasures, and the suggestions of the devil, if the smallest spark, of an indelicate

word, or a curious look, or a salute or gesture approach this smoke, immediately the first fire is re-kindled. It will not suffice to say: "I will resist temptation, and to resist it is in my power:" for, as St. Cyprian says, (*lib. de sing. Cler.*): "Who can promise himself not to feel heat, when he places himself in the midst of flames?" Even he who walks through the air on ropes hopes to support himself, notwithstanding at every instant he is in danger of being precipitated: "Ah! short sighted souls," cries out Tertullian (*lib. de pud., c. 10*), "who placing yourselves in the occasion of sinning, besides, put yourselves in danger of falling every moment." St. Jerome adds: "What judgment is this, to wish to go to those places, into those houses, to those conversations, in which of necessity, we are either to overcome, or remain vanquished." We should then well understand the great saying of St. Philip Neri, namely: "That in wars with the senses, the most cowardly vanquish, that is to say, those who fly."

A third means is, to overcome human respect. Oh! how many are there in the world who would wish to lead a holy life, but will not venture to do so. Why? It is shameful to say it: from their great fear, that some worldling of little sense might utter: "Oh! he wishes to act like a saint. What does he intend by so much affectation? for my part I have no faith in him." For such inconsiderate speeches they withdraw from good. O what weakness! What misery! while all the good and wise approve of his amendment. If even the whole world were to speak against you, only mind what

Jesus Christ, who is infallible truth, says by St. Paul : " If I yet please man I shall not be the servant of God." Ah ! miserable man, if you were damned, certainly all these worldlings could not free you from hell : you would have eternally to cry out there with the foolish wise of the world ; " We, fools, esteemed their lives madness." What then are we to do ? We must follow the example of holy David, who, although a great king, was not ashamed to dance publicly and play before the Ark, in sight of all the people : he answered his proud consort Michol, who reproved him : " No, it is not meanness, but sovereign glory, to serve that God whom the seraphim adore."—(2 *Kings* vi., 22.) " I shall appear more glorious." If ever it should cause any prejudice to my majesty, oh ! how gladly I would demean myself for the love of that God, who, from a poor shepherd, raised me to the throne of Israel. " I will make myself meaner than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes."—(2 *Kings* vi., 22.) In the same manner, we should answer whoever censures a more Christian manner of life : " Such a mode of living merits every praise ; even if it be disapproved by men, it is sufficient that it pleases God, and is very useful to my soul,

Finally, the fourth means is, to be diffident in self, and to confide sovereignly in God. We should not confide in ourselves : although a man may be good and holy, he is always earthly : all then should live in the holy fear of God, and continually pray to our Lord to bestow his assisting grace. " With fear and trembling work out your salvation."—

(*Phil.* ii., 12.) How holy was St. Philip Neri, yet very often extended on the ground, he said to God ; " Lord, keep thy hand over Philip, otherwise Philip will betray thee." How much more, then, should he diffide in himself, who, not only is not virtuous and holy, but even more frail than a reed, and inclined to fall at every breath of temptation ? It is necessary, then, that every man, in the great affair of salvation, should tremble and daily fortify himself by prayer, and frequent the holy communion, thence to receive powerful assistance to live well.

Inasmuch as we are to diffide in ourselves, inso-much we are to place all our confidence in God, hoping that in his infinite mercy, he will assist and help us in executing his inspirations and the resolutions made in the holy exercises. Can it be imagined, that in practising a Christian and holy life, you shall be alone ? No. God will be with you, and will assist you with his grace, without which you can do nothing. Who can tell how well God treats those who serve him ? He not only strengthens their weakness, he defends them in temptations, encourages them in the most arduous undertakings, saying to them as to his timid apostles ; " It is I, fear not." Even more, he assists them in the practice of virtue, renders virtue sweet, infuses celestial delights in prayer, gives them so great interior peace of conscience, that it surpasses all human enjoyment. " How good is God to them that are of a right heart."—(*Ps.* lxxii., 1.) Ask those who, from a wicked course of life, have returned to be regular. Let them acknowledge how much more happy

they are now; how they experience the truth of David's saying: "He will speak peace unto his people, and unto them that are converted to the heart."—(*Ps.* lxxxiv., 9.) Take courage, then, and confide in God; if you are in earnest, you can easily with his assistance do all the good which you have proposed.

In conclusion of the whole, dearly beloved, on leaving the exercises, I wish you to represent to your imagination, that God sends an angel to you, or rather, that the same God of whom we treat in these meditations, says to you: "Come, be convinced, that for so many years of life which you have mispent, you deserve to be banished from the world as useless for your end, and condemned to hell for so many sins: but, because you have done penance in these exercises, I pardon the past evil, and I grant you a short time longer to live. Profit well of this new mercy, and hereafter multiplying, good works, try to make amends for former failings." I repeat, represent this in a lively manner to your imagination, and begin to spend well the short remainder of your life.

Imagine that God, who, on account of your numerous sins, could have taken away your life and condemned you to hell, being now moved to pity you, through his infinite mercy, grants you a short time longer to live, that you may be disposed for eternity. With this thought imprinted on the mind, let us seriously reform our manners, and practise as many good works as possible. Oh! what a subject for reflection! How much will it avail us to pro-

fit by it ! Let us know well how to avail ourselves of the time God gives us. "If to-day you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

COLLOQUY.

Most benignant Lord, how much obliged I am to you for so much mercy ! How much have you not done, and still do, to convert me and recall me as a wandering sheep to the fold ! May you be blessed a thousand times ! If all my members were so many tongues, yet they would not suffice to exalt your infinite clemency. I cannot refrain from admiring your great patience for so many years, with an inconstant and indocile sinner such as I am. I abominate myself, knowing my infidelities and coldness, after so many benefits. You have called me in so many ways, and I turned a deaf ear. You have threatened me with chastisements, and I remained obstinate. You have promised me rewards, and I have not paid attention to them. You have attracted me with your benefits, and I have remained ungrateful. "Verberaverunt me, sed non dolui, traxerunt me, et ego non sensi ; quando evigilabo ?" "They scourged me, but I felt it not : they dragged me and I did not perceive it ; when shall I awake ?" —(*Prov. xxiii., 35.*)

Ah ! when will there be an end of all my wickedness ? When shall I arouse myself from the lethargy of so many bad habits ? "Quando evigilabo ?" What have I gained by committing sin ? What evil has it not done me ? How short soever the pleasure I experienced, yet I had to expiate it with so

much bitterness and remorse. On the contrary, when I have been united to you by grace, even pain has been sweet to me—even tears have consoled me,

O most benign Jesus! as in all these holy exercises you have given me light, and still give it to me, to know these truths, give me now the graces necessary to put them into execution. You well know my misery and frailty: deign to strengthen me, I beg of you, with the powerful assistance of your grace. Do not permit that I should ever return to my past irregularities; and give me strength to execute well the holy resolutions which I have already made, to serve you well during life, and afterwards to see, love, and enjoy you, my last end, eternally in Heaven. Amen.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me,

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water running from the side of Christ, save me.

Passion of Christ, comfort me.

O good Jesus! hear me! Hide me in thy sacred wounds. Do not permit me to be separated from thee, From the malignant enemy defend me. In the hour of death call me, and tell me to come to thee, that with thy saints and angels I may praise thee for ever and ever. Amen.

THE END,

PATTISON JOLLY, Printer 22, West Essex-street.

